EMERGING IDENTITIES
IN
CONTEMPORARY SOUTH AFRICA:

Six Individual Identity Narratives from Central Cape Town High Schools

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ABSTRACT

This research is an interdisciplinary, qualitative study of youth identity in two co-educational secondary schools with diverse student populations, in central Cape Town. Combining sociological and psychological perspectives, it seeks to understand how young South Africans are making sense of their place in the world, and in the history of their country, through exploring the way in which identities are being constructed on the site of the individual. It seeks to identify what discursive and imaginative resources young South Africans are drawing upon in the construction of their identities, how the (racialised) discourses from the past are working through them, and how they are negotiating new ways-of-being. Discourse analysis was combined with narrative methods; the former determined the discursive environment in which the students are embedded, and the latter investigated how individuals are positioned within this environment, and how they interact with this positioning. Focus groups in the schools formed the first phase of the research, followed by intensive individual interviews with six key participants. In order to understand the complexity of identity processes, the identity narratives of six individuals are the main focus of this research. Narrative methods were used to interrogate actors' own meanings in the construction of their identities, and a principal concern was to explore how participants understood, and narrated, their own identities. The intersubjective, embodied, and imaginative construction of identities was incorporated into the research. What became apparent was the way in which racialised discourses continue to dominate the post-apartheid landscape. However, racial signifiers are becoming increasingly confused, and students are resisting the positions to which they are being called. These individuals are negotiating their way through complex fields of meaning to generate new identities and ways-of-belonging that subvert former categories.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

> *'We are aware of the pervasive cultural meanings and symbols in all human action, especially in the context of diasporic communities and the borderlands of 'hybrid' identities in the new global prospects of late modern capitalism. This is especially clear in South Africa, which is an exemplary case of the post-colonial, the diasporic, the multicultural and multiracial society.'* (Thornton, 2000)

At the beginning of a new century, identity processes in South Africa speak to some of the most challenging and critical questions of the contemporary era. After the demise of apartheid, the (controversial) image of South Africa as a multicultural 'rainbow nation' was promoted nationally and internationally, symbolising the triumph of the struggle against racial and colonial injustice. However, nearly fourteen years after the first democratic elections, the image of the 'rainbow nation' is proving hard to maintain, with South Africans continuing to live largely separate lives, in a pattern of racialised inequality that is mirrored around the world. How are young South Africans making sense of their place in this society, and in the history of their country? Research into youth identities in contemporary South Africa is vital for exploring how the discourses of the past are infusing the present, yet also how young individuals are creatively engaging with resources of the present to assert their own sense of themselves. This study explores the identity narratives of six young South Africans, born at the time of Nelson Mandela's release from prison, who are now entering adulthood. Using narrative methods, this research traces the processes by which they have come to understand themselves and their relation to the world, and reveals the ways in which they are reproducing, resisting, and refashioning racialised identities, negotiating and constructing new ways-of-being for themselves.

After 1994 the South African government and private sector fully engaged in global economic markets. South Africans were to experience dramatic changes to their everyday lives, in terms of access to goods, media, styles and ideas from across the globe. As the post-apartheid generation is coming into adulthood, South Africa is an 'exemplary' society as it forms a critical site for the study of post-colonial, post-modern identities. This research is informed by post-colonial theories of race, identity, and culture, in sociology, cultural studies, and critical social psychology. It is only through combining all these perspectives that a deeper understanding of the processes of social transformation in South Africa can be understood.

Research in multiracial educational contexts in South Africa has shown how racial difference is being rearticulated as cultural difference, reinforcing racialised identities and segregation (Dolby, 2001; Erasmus and De Wet, 2003; Soudien, 2004b, 2007). However, these studies all show that multiple and contradictory discourses are operating, making room for new ways-of-being to come into existence. Research into urban youth culture shows the emergence of new identities which draw heavily upon globalised popular culture (Dolby, 2001; Nuttall, 2004a; Salo, 2004). Soudien (2004b) argues that there is a need for research that investigates the processes of meaning-making in which *individual* subjects/agents/actors are engaged, in the formation of identities. This study looks at how these new ways-of-being are produced and performed at the site of the individual; that is, how these processes are *lived* by individuals in the construction of their identities. In-depth exploration of the individual narratives of young South Africans is therefore critical in contributing to an understanding of why and how the cultural currents and new identities documented by Dolby (2001), Nuttall (2004a) and Salo (2004) are emerging.

This research is framed by a social constructionist account of identity, which considers the role of discourse and power in shaping identities. It is concerned to articulate the way in which discourses work on the subject, fixing their identities, as well as to investigate the ways in which individuals interact with their discursive positionings, and the ways in which this process is unique to each and every individual. As argued by Giddens (1991:14), self-identity is a reflexive project, shaped by the society and circumstances in which we find ourselves, and all the experiences we have had in life: 'Each of us not only 'has', but *lives* a biography reflexively organised in terms of flows of social and psychological information about possible ways of life'. This research aims to identify the possible ways of life that are being presented to young South Africans, and how they are working with these to construct identities that resonate with their experiences.

The study was based in two coeducational public schools in central Cape Town, attended by students from diverse geographical and social locations. In-depth qualitative methods and analysis were used to explore the identity narratives of six individuals, to see what discursive and imaginative resources they are drawing on in making sense of who they are, and want to be, and the role that being in a diverse learning environment plays in this. This research is therefore not attempting to be generalisable to all youth in South Africa, but instead works in great depth with a

small group of individuals to explore the complex and difficult ways in which each individual is negotiating their identities in everyday life, amongst friends, family and peers.

Based on extensive individual interviews, this research explores the stories that young South Africans are telling of their lives and how they have come to be who they are, and the texture of the many identities that they are having to live simultaneously, in the midst of an immensely diverse and rapidly changing society. It aims to shed light on the way in which 'race' is currently operating in South African society, on questions of intergenerational dynamics and social change, and on the globalisation and creolisation of identities. Youth identity in South Africa is of critical concern because it can give us a glimpse into the possible futures of this country, and the world.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Positioning and Literature Review

> *'...actually identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves'* (Hall, 1996:4)

Identity as a 'process of becoming' is the central concern of this research; identity not as a retrospective act, but as an active owning of the present and future, by young South Africans, as they make sense of where they are and who they want to be. The 'resources of history, language and culture' in South Africa are particularly diverse and potent, imbued with deeply contested historical and political meanings. This chapter will first present the theoretical perspective on identity that this research adopts, and then offer a literature review of recent studies concerned with youth identity in contemporary South Africa, illustrating the complex fields of meaning that young South Africans are negotiating daily. Finally, it will summarise the key questions that this research hopes to answer.

Identity

Whilst different cultures have never existed as bounded, autonomous entities, and the history of human beings is one of histories of migration, the post-colonial era of late modernity has seen dramatic increases in the global movement of people, capital, and cultures, and collective social identities have been increasingly destabilised (Giddens, 1991; Goldberg, 2002; Hall, 1997; Wicker, 1997). As a consequence, and with the influence of feminist and post-structuralist thought from the 1960s onwards, the concepts of 'culture' and 'identity' have undergone intense interrogation, and come to play central roles in sociology, cultural studies, and social psychology. Cooper and Brubaker (2005) argue that the term 'identity' has been stretched beyond its capacity for meaning, and is so problematic that it must be rejected as a term for academic analysis. Whilst the study of identity is fraught with theoretical and methodological issues, the aim should not be to fix the definition of 'identity', but to pursue the complexity of meanings around it, for, as Hall (1996:2) argues, identity is 'an idea which cannot be thought in the old way, but without which certain key questions cannot be thought at all'.

Current theorisations suggest that one is not born 'having' a certain *natural* identity, but rather each individual is engaged in a continuous process of 'becoming' (Cooper and Brubaker, 2005; Crossley, 1996; Hall, 1996). This applies to sexuality, 'race', class, cultural and ethnic affiliations, and all forms of identification. The common usage of gender, 'race', and class as *the* three critical vectors of difference has come under criticism; even if one adds other factors such as age, language group, location, disability, and sexual orientation, this still works to essentialise identity as being constituted by categories, and fails to articulate the temporally shifting identity trajectories and lived experiences of individuals (Hall, 1997; Lorbiecki and Jack, 2000; Yep, 2001). Individuals occupy many such positions simultaneously, and in shifting configurations. Identities are therefore multiple, fluid, non-unitary, contradictory and fractured, continually reconstructed and *in process* as individuals move between the different spheres of their lives, in terms of social relations, time, and spaces (Calhoun, 1994; Crossley, 1996; Hall, 1996; Wildman and Davis, 2000; Woodward, 1997; Young, 2000; Zegeye, 2001).

Discourses, and the power relations informing those discourses, structure the systems of meaning in which we are embedded, and are formative in the construction of subjectivity and identity (Calhoun, 1994; Hall, 1996; Henriques, 1998; Woodward, 1997). Discursive psychology has been criticised for not taking into account the role of subject agency and creativity in identity formation (Henriques, 1998). However, Hall (1996) and Crossley (1996) show us that, whilst many of Foucault's followers may not have made this leap, his later work did open up the question of "the subject", its relation to discourse and its reflexive relation to self, and thus the production of the self as object (identity construction). Whilst post-structuralism deconstructed the notion of a unitary, rational subject, 'the subject' did not cease to exist, but needed to be re-theorised (Henriques, 1998:ix).

Hall (1996:2) argues that 'it seems to be in the attempt to rearticulate the relationship between subjects and discursive practices that the question of identity recurs'. Theorising identity is theorising the ways in which individuals respond to and engage with the mesh of discursive locations in which they find themselves; how they

> 'identify (or do not identify) with the 'positions' to which they are summoned...how they fashion, stylise, produce and 'perform' these positions, and why they never do so completely, for once and all time, and some never do, or are in a constant, antagonistic process of struggling with, resisting, negotiating and accommodating the

> normative or regulative rules with which they confront and regulate themselves. In short, what remains is the requirement to think this relation of subject to discursive formations *as an articulation.*' (Hall, 1996:14)

Here, Hall is drawing on Laclau and Mouffe's (1985:105) concept of articulation, which is 'any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice'. Identity is the relationship between those discourses that are speaking to us and the way that we identify with (consciously and unconsciously), and therefore invest in, them. It is only in the *investment* that meaning is given to these discourses, and they are activated in our own lives and identities, and it is only through this relationship that discourses and the subjects *come into being.*

This fine-tuning of our understanding of identity has resulted in the foregrounding of 'identification' as a preferable term (Cooper and Brubaker, 2005; Hall, 1996). The word 'identity' sets the trap for essentialism as it connotes 'internal sameness' and 'bounded groupness' (Cooper and Brubaker, 2005:71). 'Identification' captures the element of *process*, and points towards the active role of the individual subject within that process (*ibid.*). In the process of 'identification' there is never a total fit between elements (Hall, 1996:3), hence the fraught nature of identities. It is at this point that Hall draws in Derrida's notion of *différance*, which holds that meaning can never be completed or fixed, that a total fit can never be accomplished, and hence there is always a 'slippage' (Woodward,1997:21). This 'slippage' accounts for the continual effort of identity, as the cracks in the fit of discourses to subject must be continually worked upon.

Narrative

> *'such a complex and fleeting construction as human identity – the self in time – can only exist as a narrative construction. Without the narrative fabric, it seems difficult to think of human temporality and historicity at all...narrative proves to be a supremely appropriate means for the exploration of the self or, more precisely, the construction of selves in cultural contexts of time and space'* (Brockmeier and Carbaugh, 2001:15)

'Identity' as a concept came into being with the rise of modernity, not because it had not 'existed' beforehand, but because of a dissolution of traditional ways of knowing and being (Bauman, 1996; Calhoun, 1994; Giddens, 1991). 'One thinks of identity whenever one is not sure of where one belongs' (Bauman, 1996:19),

with identity-building offering the escape route from this uncertainty. Shotter (1993:189), in contemplating identity in the post-modern era, asks:

> 'If life has become an improvisatory art, and adjusting to discontinuity is not an idiosyncratic problem of one's own, but the emerging problem of our time, what is involved in becoming the authors of our own lives? What are our sources of self?'

Bauman (1996) argues that the 'modern life strategy' of identity-building has been followed by a post-modern reaction in which individuals resist being 'bound and fixed' to certain identity categories. He presents the metaphors of 'the stroller, the vagabond, the tourist and the player' as representing this post-modern moment. The stroller meanders through shopping malls, browsing for pleasure, and consuming television images in a similar manner; the masterless vagabond has nowhere to settle; the tourist seeks thrills from the strange, with 'home' being both a shelter and a prison; players rely on luck to see them through unpredictable times (Bauman, 1996). The different characterisations represent different strategies of coping in the contemporary age.

Individuals 'create a range of narrative strategies in relation to their discursive environments' (Chase, 2005:657), and in response to the power relations in which they are embedded. The paragraph below summarises a narrative conception of identity, which echoes the aforementioned critique of the categorical approach:

> 'While a social identity or categorical approach presumes internally stable concepts, such that under normal conditions entities within that category will act predictably, the narrative identity approach embeds the actor within relationships and stories that shift over time and space and thus precludes categorical stability in action' (Somers and Gibson, 1994:65).

A narrative is not a statement or description of identity, but constitutes action in the construction of the self; 'when someone tells a story, he or she shapes, constructs, and performs the self, experience, and reality' (Chase, 2005:657). If identity is the relationship between discourses and the subject, then narrative is the efforts of the subject to understand and define this relationship; identity is 'that which is narrated in one's own self' (Hall, 1997:49). Narrative therefore constitutes a subject's self-identity, and this self-identity

> 'has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual...Self-identity is not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of traits, possessed by the individual. It is *the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography*' (Giddens, 1991:52, italics author's own).

Identity as strategies of the self in understanding personal histories and positionings is a central concern of this research. In addition, narratives constitute moral statements about how lives should be lived, as subjects seek to validate their experiences

(Freeman and Brockmeier, 2001). The question is, therefore, what strategies young individuals are engaging in their construction of self-identity, and what system of values underpin these actions, at this moment in time in South Africa.

Parallel to developments in narrative theory has been the emergence of positioning theory in psychology, which highlights similar elements in identity processes. The more static concept of 'roles' is replaced with that of 'positions', a flexible term which can accommodate the ever-changing nature of identities (Harré and Slocum, 2003:126-7). Positioning theory interrogates the 'local moral orders' of specific situations, uncovering how individuals are positioned within them, how that limits their actions, what different actions mean in that context, and what 'storylines' frame this meaning (Harré and Moghaddam, 2003).

However, this research focuses on how individuals understand themselves, and so adopts a narrative approach. A narrative approach to identity gets close to the subject, illustrating the many discourses, relations and positionings the subject is negotiating, as well as their active role in the construction of their reality. This closeness allows for levels of depth and complexity that cannot be reached by other approaches. Whilst narrative research can entail a search for patterns within identity categories, the very nature of narrative work ensures that the particularity of each individual and the complexity of their identity will be able to emerge, and so the discourses that work to 'fix' individuals within categories are subverted (Chase, 2005).

Imaginaries

Stories involve imagination, and many theorists of identity have come to recognise the critical role that imagination and imaginaries play in the subject's active construction of their identities (Crossley, 1996; Hall, 1996; Henriques, 1998; Shotter, 1993). Hall (1996:4) argues that the fictive nature of these connections in no way undermines their 'discursive, material political effectivity'. 'The imaginary' must enter the theoretical vocabulary of identity for the following reason:

> 'we need talk of "the imaginary", because discourses work to produce rather than simply to reflect the 'objects' to which the words uttered within them seem to refer; we need a way of talking about (indicating) their transitional status, their only as yet partial existence' (Shotter, 1993:199).

That is, we need the concept of 'imaginaries' to describe 'entities' which have not yet been hardened into discourse (*ibid.*). Imaginaries, rather than existing simply in the

mind of the individual, are constituted through the intersubjective generation of meaning (Crossley, 1996). Whilst 'non-locatable', they are nevertheless 'real' in that they enable action, achieving 'reproducible results', as they allow individuals to share meaning and generate belonging; most critically, *new* belongings, making them 'sources of continuous, unforeseeable creativity and novelty', and thus a vital element of culture (Shotter, 1993:199). In a similar vein, Hall (1996), Henriques (1998) and Shotter (1993) all critique approaches to identity, including narrative, that exclude the consideration of unconscious processes. This, however, falls out of the scope of this research as I want to focus on how the participants *themselves* understand and construct their identities.

Henriques (1998:xv) also argues that narrative and discursive approaches to the construction of subjectivity fail to take into account 'the effects of practices and relations, as opposed to words', on an individual's identity. There is a failure to consider the materiality of the subject's lives and

> 'the intermingling of bodies and consciousnesses in actions that performatively institute ways of being and doing, that is to say, that performatively produce particular identities and subjectivities' (*ibid.*).

Several writers have shown how this materiality does exist within discursive and narrative conceptualisations of identity (Bourdieu, 2001; Crossley, 1996; Henriques, 1998; Hetherington, 1998). What is required is not an introduction, but an expansion of the role the following two concepts play in the constitution of subjectivity: intersubjectivity (the intermingling of consciousnesses) and embodiment (and of bodies).

Intersubjectivity

For Foucault, power does not exist in and of itself, but only through the actions of people upon other people (Crossley, 1996; Hall, 1996). Discourses are *shared* meanings, with that meaning being generated *between* human beings, who produce the social world through their interaction, and thus 'the force of power is an intersubjective force based on meaning' (Crossley, 1996:137). Consequently, power does not *determine* how people will act, but instead acts upon and influences their *choices* for action (*ibid.*). This is again important in countering the notion that discursive analysis neglects agency and creativity (and thus resistance), that discourses are 'out there' acting upon people regardless of their will.

Subjects not only are positioned within discourses, but are actively involved in the generation and sedimentation of discourse. The social world and the individual subject are inextricably interlinked, and one cannot be divorced from the other. Crossley's (1996) work on intersubjectivity illustrates the complexity of how we are situated not simply within discourses, but within discourses created and lived by human beings. The intersubjective nature of power, and its influence on the process of identities, must be considered in the context young people growing up in diverse societies in which they are faced with a plethora of perspectives and meanings in their daily interactions with others.

Embodied subjectivities

'the habitus makes coherence and necessity out of accident and contingency' (Bourdieu, 2001:542)

The body is hotly contested terrain in the discussion of identity; as the locus of debate between biologically determinist and social constructionist schools of identity, as the site for the marking of difference in the construction of the 'Other', and as formative of the experience of subjectivity and identity (Crossley, 1996; Henriques, 1998; Giddens, 1991; Woodard, 1997; Young, 1990). Post-structuralist critiques moved away from the mind/body, individual/social dualisms to emphasise the way in which subjectivity is constituted by bodily, relational and emotional experiences (Crossley, 1996; Henriques, 1998), which I believe can be explored through narrative methods. Merleau-Ponty locates subjectivity in the body, as opposed to in the 'mind' or 'consciousness' (Young, 1990:147). Consequently, the body is not simply a 'container' for the 'mind', or 'self', but is a 'material and psychic space in interaction with others and with the material environment' (Henriques, 1998:xvi).

Bourdieu's (2001) writings have been vital in theorising the way in which subjectivities are constructed intersubjectively and through bodily experience. Each body carries different meanings with it, and this results in the differential structuring of 'habitus' out of the 'accident' of which body a subject finds themselves occupying. Habitus is 'a subjective but not individual system of internalised structures, schemes of perception, conception and action common to all members of the same group or class' (Bourdieu, 2001:541), and produces *embodied* practices that constitute and (re)produce culture and identities. *Overdetermination* of meaning from bodily

difference results in the confinement of different subjects to different positions, and thus the development of different 'habitus'. Therefore, the body is 'the always-already marked monument inscribed with the values and the history of particular cultures', and 'one cannot assume an essential sameness of human subjectivity across cultures or gender' (Henriques, 1998:xv), or indeed, time. Consideration of the specific meanings attached to different signifiers on bodies that are 'always-already marked', and the effect this has on the experience of identities, is vital in the South African context, where 'race' is the persistent signifier of difference. In addition, in the contemporary era the body has increasingly become the site for the construction and expression of self-identity (Giddens, 1991; Woodard, 1997). Consideration of embodied subjectivities and bodily practices are an essential element of any study of identity.

This research will therefore be framed by a conceptualisation of identity as a process of *becoming*, which is continually shifting according to where in the constellation of relations, symbols, and discourses the (embodied) subject finds themselves, and how they interact with this.

Youth Identity in South Africa

What is happening to identity processes in this 'exemplary case of the post-colonial, the diasporic, the multicultural and multiracial society'? (Thornton, 2000:47). South Africa represents a particularly complex moment in the history of humanity; a country struggling to free itself of a racist past, composed of diverse peoples and cultures of African, European and Asian descent, and imbibing the globalised flow of commodities and cultural systems of the contemporary era. Post-apartheid South Africa forms a critical site for contestation around the meanings of 'race' and 'identity'. Colonial and apartheid discourse relied upon a 'fixity' and closure of meaning around racial difference and identity (Bhabha, 1994; Norval, 2003). The end of apartheid signalled the possibility of an opening up of these concepts, and whilst this has occurred in certain spaces, racialised identities, informal segregation, and the logic of 'race' thinking are reproduced at all levels of contemporary South African society (Dixon and Durrheim, 2003; Erasmus, 2005; Foster, 1999; Steyn, 2001). The younger generation bear the burden of becoming the post-apartheid, non-racist future, and so youth identity, and educational institutes in

particular, have become the focus of research into integration and transformation (Dolby, 2001; Erasmus and De Wet, 2003; Gooskens, 2006; Soudien, 2007).

Whilst this research is based on young, school-going individuals, 'youth identity' is a much broader category, to which a finite age range cannot be ascribed, but instead, as I interpret it here, it is a term that is meant to capture and represent the spectrum of 'new ways-of-being' that are continually emerging in all societies as members of each generation 'come into themselves'. However, by 'each generation' I do not mean to imply that history is the progress of one enclosed generation after the next, and acknowledge that

> 'youth identities are not created by breaks with the old and then suddenly new ones appear instantly. They instead overlap and are negotiated constantly, both in a spirit of playfulness and sometimes of conflict' (Badsha, 2003:135).

Youth identities form a critical site for 'theorising the *now*, or the contemporary, in South Africa' (Nuttall, 2004b); the younger generation live the present in new ways-of-being that are inflected with the past. This section will survey recent research in both educational and non-educational contexts, offering insight into the identity processes in which young South Africans are entangled and actively negotiating. In particular, focus has been given to research that considers the approaches to identity covered in the theory section. The writers surveyed in this literature review, and myself, interpret 'race' as a social construction, with no biological basis, and seek to interrogate how meaning is assigned 'to real and/or imagined biological and/or cultural markers' (Erasmus and De Wet, 2003:8), within structures and relations of power.

Dolby (2001), Erasmus and De Wet (2003) and Soudien (2007) investigate youth identity formation within the post-apartheid educational context, and, critically, as well as showing *that* informal segregation continues, these studies look at *how*; through providing historical and sociological context, and by exploring how students conceptualise, talk about, and work with 'race'. This interrogates actors' meanings and practices, uncovering the psychological and discursive processes that operate to construct meaning and identity in the students' lives and interactions. The students in these studies reconstruct notions of essentialised difference through re-articulating 'race' as 'culture'. Still using the apartheid categories of 'black', 'white', 'Indian' and 'coloured' to refer to themselves and each other, students often experience discomfort or distress in situations where racialised boundaries have to be crossed.

However, in these learning environments the discursive shift from apartheid discourses of 'race' to these students' discourses of 'culture' and 'taste' (Dolby, 2001) has allowed for some 'slippage' in the concept of 'race', and thus for connections across racialised borders to develop. Whilst contradictions were present in apartheid, race borders were more heavily and violently policed (Erasmus, 2000a:380). Today, whilst individual students crossing such borders may be labelled and alienated from their own 'race' group, there are wider shifts in constellations around 'taste' that serve to undermine these very groupings (Dolby, 2001). For example, as "rave" music (exclusively 'white' in the early part of Dolby's time at the school) began to be played in 'coloured' clubs, students begin to dance with, and date, each other across this porous border, which the students still spoke of as concrete (Dolby, 2001:91). In addition, Soudien (2007) and Strelitz (2003) identify how class affiliations override racial identity in certain situations, shifting 'difference' onto another variable.

Soudien (2007:105) argues that 'as places where habituses are nurtured, the schools are powerful cultural machines'. In all the formerly 'white' institutions in the studies mentioned so far, whiteness continues to dominate as the cultural model upon which students must mould their behaviours. This is in the form of both 'aggressive assimilation' (Soudien, 2004b:104), where teachers draw on discourses of white superiority and black inferiority, as well as 'benign assimilation' (*ibid.*) where educational institutions adopt a 'multicultural' discourse which reaffirms apartheid categories (Dolby, 2001; Erasmus and De Wet, 2003; Soudien, 2007). This represents a reworking of relations of power, as 'dominance is reinterpreting itself' (Soudien, 2004b:111). The result is frustration and pain for many students of colour, who are faced with 'the large challenge of working out what dominant middle-class white and often anglicised culture wants of them' (Soudien, 2007:18), as well as having to learn how to negotiate multiple identities between school and home.

Critically, each student will respond differently to their learning environment, and the positions to which they are being called or denied; each individual has 'different racialised inner constructs of reality with different real effects on the ways in which they negotiate the learning context' (Erasmus and De Wet, 2003:23). Exploring these differences highlights how 'slippery' (Motsemme, 2002:654) the concept of 'race' is. Motsemme (*ibid*) analyses gendered experiences of blackness in post-apartheid South Africa, and her close narrative work with five women shows 'the extent ways-of-being-black vary spatially and temporally'. Each

individual's subjectivity is uniquely constituted and experienced, and Motsemme's (2002) work clearly shows the *situatedness* of each subject, and how their sense of who they are in terms of 'race' and gender is created through the specificity of each life story, and of that moment in history.

There is a contradiction at the heart of identity in post-apartheid South Africa; the post-apartheid subject is inevitably trapped, 'a subject caught between the desire to erase race but simultaneously invoking it at every turn to define oneself' (Motsemme, 2002:658). This tension is played out in the field of academia. Steyn (2001:xxxii) notes how many South Africans are keen to create a distance from apartheid, yet she warns that

> 'The construction of race has been used to skew this society over centuries. If we prematurely banish it from our analytical framework, we serve the narrow interests of those previously advantaged, by concealing the enduring need for redress. To deal with the expressions of power, we have to call it by its name'

In contrast, Soudien (2004b) and Nuttall and Michael (2000) argue that there is a need to move beyond the 'master signifier' (Nuttall and Michael, 2000:11) of 'race' to understand identity processes in contemporary South Africa.

However, the two perspectives are not mutually exclusive, but need to be held together in any consideration of identity in South Africa. The 'master narratives' of 'race' and class cannot be avoided (Wasserman and Jacobs, 2003), but there is a need to articulate, firstly, how racialised identities are multiple and contradictory, and secondly, the breadth of other elements that are equally critical in the construction of identities. What must be kept in mind is that (as argued in the theoretical section) people are not constituted, nor their behaviour determined, by the categories they are positioned within. Whilst categories are helpful in mapping discourses, we need to take into account the

> 'many levels of complexity and meaning which people are negotiating every day to navigate through their identities as well as their everyday activities. There has to be enough space to accommodate ambiguity and sometimes confusing complexity because it is in these uncertain and volatile spaces that many of the most exciting and significant ideas and practices develop' (Badsha, 2003:141).

It is hoped that this research accesses some of those spaces, through holding the messiness and complexity of identities alongside an awareness of the structural and psychological legacy of apartheid and 'race thinking' (Erasmus, 2005).

In understanding identity as a process of becoming, it is vital that one gets a sense of the process as a whole, of the 'feeling' of being that person, not in an emotional sense (though this can be incorporated), but in an ontological sense

(Shotter, 1993:xiii). Battersby (2003), Dolby (2001), Nuttall (2004a), Motsemme (2002), and Salo (2004) all highlight the role of imaginaries, and incorporate the realm of desires, imagination, pleasure and consumption into their theories of identity. The older woman from Motsemme's (2002:665) study did not identify with the discourse of black resistance, and instead made sense of her traumatic psychological and material oppression through the church, which offered her 'a powerful alternative imaginary space of spiritual time...an important psychic reservoir'. Through narrative, we see how subject agency and imagination interact with the discursive positioning of the subject, creating their (shifting) sense of identity. What psychic reservoirs and imaginary spaces are young South Africans using to cope with the challenges they face?

The multicultural, multi-coloured 'rainbow nation' is a dominant imaginary in public discourse (Distiller and Steyn, 2004). The South African Broadcasting Corporation has committed itself to being 'a nation builder' with 'missionary zeal' (Teer-Tomaselli, 2001), and consequently the media is saturated with images of diverse South Africans enjoying each others' company. Salo (2004), in her exploration of adolescent racial and gendered identities in Manenberg Township on the Cape Flats, argues there is a 'renovation of personhood' occurring, as young people access the imaginary of the 'new' South Africa through the media and cosmopolitan spaces. Whilst they might not have money to purchase music, brand name clothing, and other accessories, through watching certain television programmes and occasionally managing to visit nightclubs in the city, they are making themselves conversant in the languages, styles and social codes that their wealthier counterparts are living:

> 'Through their transgressive and transformative practices, they are acquiring the cultural capital that facilitates their ability to occupy, or imagine themselves as part of, the new national cosmopolitan spaces of cultural, racial and ethnic diversity' (Salo, 2004:23).

Through consuming the image of the 'rainbow nation', these young people are actively owning it as an identity. Similarly, Nuttall (2004a:433) investigates "Y" culture (after the "X" generation of anti-apartheid resistance) or *loxion kulcha* in Johannesburg, which mixes "location" (township) culture with black middle-class lifestyles and transnational imaginaries, through new media technologies, fashion and consumer culture. "Y" culture operates as a 'locus of aspiration' (Nuttall, 2004a:451) as not all those who consume this imaginary can afford its products, yet also because

it is an imaginary space in which history and 'race' are subject to a 'remixing and recoding' (*ibid.*:437), and in this 'utopian possibilities' (*ibid.*:450) come alive. All writers mentioned thus far show how historically located 'race' categories continue to dominate and restrict identity in a 'free' South Africa, yet how many individuals are resisting and reshaping these categories.

Whilst apartheid did not wholly succeed in isolating its population, and there has always been 'considerable leaking between "local" and "global"' on account of centuries of 'osmosis' across the globe (Kraidy, 1999:459), the end of apartheid and the rise of new technologies has meant a proliferation of access to cultural forms, styles and commodities from the rest of the world. This has exponentially increased the discursive and imaginative resources available to young South Africans, and the impact on their identities is explored by many writers (Badsha, 2003; Battersby, 2003; Dolby, 2001; Nuttall, 2004a; Salo, 2004). Whilst 'everyone still continues to live a local life...the intrusion of distance into local activities, combined with the centrality of mediated experience' has meant that the 'phenomenal world' of the individual is radically altered and has become 'truly global' as individuals, consciously and unconsciously, incorporate all the images they are exposed to in their daily lives into their psyches (Giddens, 1991:187).

Dolby (2001:113) shows how students use commodities from the global market of popular culture, from American hip-hop clothing labels to rave music to Bollywood films, to signify local constructions of 'white', 'black', 'coloured' and 'Indian', and

> 'the fantasy of race as a purely locational construction is shattered, as its embeddedness in the global is made evident. Here, the micropolitics of Fernwood [*school*] interact with the macrospatial world of global popular culture and inevitably connect to the scapes that reconfigure students' place in the world'.

Students tap into the 'scapes' which have resonance for them, and are not dislocating from their localities (Salo, 2004:6), but instead are creatively reworking the global (racialised) cultural resources that resonate with their local struggles around identity. Battersby (2003) shows how, through hip-hop, African American forms of resistance have been adopted in South Africa, and a process of 'transculturation' is occurring, where one culture dominates and the other culture adopts, refashions and resists this domination. This process in flux, dependent on the highly localised cultural contexts in which individuals are engaging with different media. Strelitz (2003) shows how viewing preferences of working-class black students shifted when they left home to

go to university. Whilst many had watched foreign productions at home, upon attending Rhodes University and feeling alienated from the middle-class culture of other students ('black' and 'white'), these students rejected their former choices and instead gathered to watch African language programmes every evening, in a residence they named "Homeland" in which they only spoke Xhosa (Strelitz, 2003:241).

Kraidy (1999) argues that we need to move beyond the domination/resistance paradigm in theorising global/local cultures. Similarly, Salo (2004:6) argues that far from homogenising identities on a global scale, 'cultural flows of music, dress styles, technological gadgetry and the like emanating from the North are incorporated into the local values and practices and thereby given *new meaning*' (my italics). Nuttall (2004a:450) argues that the potency of Y culture is derived from tapping into global currents, however, it is a 'transnational imagination that is irreducibly located in the current semiotic landscape of South Africa' (Nuttall, 2004a:450). Y culture is making 'new languages both within and beyond practices of translatability' (Nuttall, 2004a:449), and for her this represents a *transfiguration* of meaning. Meaning 'seldom moves across borders with pristine integrity' (Papastergiadis, 1997:278) and is reinterpreted and *remade* in new cultural contexts.

In what ways are these emerging social practices and identities the result of processes of 'hybridisation' or 'creolisation'? In the literature, there is a great deal of overlap and debate around the two terms. The two concepts, like identity, have been subject to rigorous post-structuralist critique. 'Hybridity' as a concept involves the juxtaposition and fusion of 'objects, languages, signifying practices from different and normally separated domains' (Werbner, 1997:2). Creolisation refers to a similar fusion of different cultures and languages, though the power differentials are rendered more explicit, as it describes cultural processes arising from slavery and its aftermath (Erasmus, 2000c; Nuttall and Michael, 2000). However, all cultures are hybrid and Creole as cultures do not, and have never, existed as bounded entities, and are in a process of continual change, and therefore:

> 'Hybridity is meaningless as a description of 'culture' because this 'museumises' culture as a 'thing'...Culture as an analytic concept is always hybrid, since it can be understood properly only as the *historically negotiated creation* of more or less coherent symbolic and social worlds' (Werbner, 1997:15, my italics).

Therefore, what grounds remain for using either of these terms to describe cultural processes?

Bakhtin made a distinction between 'organic' and aesthetic hybridity; the former an unconscious continual process of change occurring in all languages, as no cultures are static or exist in isolation, and the latter a conscious process of resistance, intended to shock and destabilise (Werbner, 1997:4). As with Bakhtin's 'organic' hybridity, Glissant's notion of creolisation points towards the continual process of change 'inherent in all forms of cultural encounter' (Nuttall and Michael, 2000:7). Kraidy (1999:472) argues for the use of hybridity in conceptualising the way in which competing discourses are negotiated, where 'hybridity is the dialogical re-inscription of various codes and discourses in a spatio-temporal zone of signification'. Hybridity and creolisation do not therefore refer to the 'mixing' of different 'cultures' but negotiations of meaning around different, shifting signifiers. Conceptually, they are important in illuminating the *process* (verb) of identity formation, particularly in contexts such as contemporary South Africa, where signifiers of 'identity' are highly contested.

Research Questions

This research will consider the ways in which youth identities are being negotiated, in light of the breadth of shifting discourses of this moment in South African history. It seeks to discover how young individuals, attending schools in which they are faced with a diversity of social backgrounds and perspectives, are constructing their identity narratives, and making sense of their location in South Africa and the world. What discursive resources and imaginaries do the students draw upon in constructing their identities? What is the place of 'race' amongst these discursive resources? In what ways are students creatively remaking these resources? What new ways-of-being are the students negotiating and constructing? In what ways does this work to reinstate or breakdown power dynamics between racial imaginaries? This research attempts to develop a complex understanding of the interplay between discourses and the subject's constitution of self-identity during late adolescence, in the contemporary South African context.

Chapter 3: Methodology

> *'The design and methods used to analyse the social fabric cannot be separated from the way reality is constructed...A deep interdisciplinarity is justified by an understanding of the complexity of the object of inquiry and the demands such complications place on the research act'*
> (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2005:320).

Young South Africans are wrestling with an immensely complex social world, imbued with controversial and contradictory meaning systems. As a consequence, this research is framed by an interdisciplinary and narrative approach to identity processes, which allows for the complexity of this particular social fabric to be articulated. I drew on the concept of the social researcher as 'bricoleur', who uses different tools as the situation changes (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2005; Neuman, 2000). The researcher as bricoleur is a 'methodological negotiator', drawing on different disciplines, and creatively responding to the social world in which they are embedded, and attempting to understand (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2005). The critical turn in the social sciences has led to an emphasis on 'experience, subjectivity, reflexivity, and dialogical understanding' (*ibid.*, p.330), and these four elements form the backbone to this research design. This chapter provides an explication of the interdisciplinary and narrative approach adopted, followed by a detailed description of the research context and methodology, including a consideration of various limitations.

Research Design

> *'The value of combining discourse and narrative, methodologically and analytically, must lie in the possibilities it holds for addressing the dimensions of subjectivity as a cultural phenomenon'* (Sclater, 2000:134)

Before proceeding further, some clarification is required as to how the terms 'discourse' and 'narrative' are employed in this research. Both terms have a broad range of conceptual meanings and definitions. 'Discourse', in its broadest sense, refers to the full range of means by which human beings construct meaning and communicate, and in this sense refers to all 'linguistic productions...concrete practices shot through with the uses of words' (Brockmeier and Harré, 2001:42). Narrative is therefore a form of this broad definition of discourse (*ibid.*). However, I will be using 'discourse' in the sociological sense, as theorised by Foucault, to refer to ways of talking and thinking that structure social and cultural meaning in society, and

are shaped by relations of power (as in Hall, 1996). Similarly vague, a narrative is 'a sequence of events in time' (Andrews et al., 2000:3, referring to Berger, 1997). There is some conceptual overlap here, as discourses also move through time, forming social and cultural 'narratives'. Instead of these 'meta-narratives', I will be looking at personal narratives, that is, the stories people tell about their lives, and specifically who they see themselves as being at this moment in time.

This research aims to explore the ways in which young South Africans are constructing their identity narratives, and aims to identify some of the discursive and imaginative resources which shape this process. In order to do this, the discursive worlds in which they are embedded must be understood. Secondly, the way in which individuals interact with these discursive resources must be explored, specifically how they incorporate, resist or remake them in the living of their identities. As explained by Sclater (2000:131), discourses and narratives are inextricably linked in identity processes:

> 'discourses exert a structuring influence on narrative accounts, at the same time as those accounts provide the broader parameters within which discursive meanings are negotiated and realised, even if partially and temporarily'.

Therefore, it is only in combining the discursive and narrative realms of identity, and showing how they relate to and constitute one another, that the social/individual binary can be deconstructed, to reveal the way in which the social world is only produced through the *living* of meaning by individuals, thus explaining 'subjectivity as a cultural phenomenon' (Sclater, 2000:134).

The research design is therefore constituted of two main phases. Firstly, focus groups were conducted in both schools to get a sense of the discursive environments in which the students are embedded. Secondly, individuals were selected from these focus groups, and invited to engage with me in a conversation about their identities. This was done through a process that involved in-depth interviews and other creative methods. It is these personal identity narratives that are the central concern of this research. This will be explained in the following section, before we come to a detailed discussion of the focus groups and interviews.

Narrative research

Narrative constitutes the "missing link" between the individual and the social, as it details the process by which individuals come to understand their location(s) in society, and respond to these, in a process where

> 'Material social conditions, discourses and practices interweave with subjectively experienced desires and identities and people make choices, reconstruct pasts and imagine futures within the range of possibilities open to them (Andrews et al., 2001:1).

Therefore, narrative is invaluable in bridging the gap between psychology and sociology, as neither the 'social' nor the 'individual' is privileged, and 'both are constructed in relation to each other, not in the "outer" realm of society and culture, or the "inner" realm of personality characteristics, but in a distinct, "psychosocial" zone' (*ibid.*). Narrative allows for a holistic understanding of social phenomena (Daiute and Lightfoot, 2004). Stressing its importance for anthropological investigations, Brockmeier and Harré (2001:53) describe how it 'works as an open and malleable frame that enables us to come to terms with an ever-changing, ever reconstructed reality'. Daiute and Lightfoot (2004:viii) draw attention to the use of narrative 'for addressing the unmet challenge of integrating culture, person, and change', especially relevant in understanding processes of transformation in the contemporary South African context.

A central motivation for the research is to understand how meanings from the past are being reinterpreted and remade in the present by the younger generation, particularly important in the context of the persistence of 'race' discourses in South Africa. However, it is vital to show not only how young people in contemporary South Africa relate to and interact with the discourses in which they are embedded, but also, critically, how they do this *in different ways*, not only because of different personal histories, but because of the agency and creativity involved in the construction of individual identities. This counteracts 'discourse determinism' (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000:136), which overlooks the agency of the subject. Narrative research shows how people

> 'make sense of personal experience in relation to culturally and historically specific discourses, and how they *draw on*, *resist*, and/or *transform* those discourses as they narrate their selves, experiences, and realities' (Chase, 2005:659, my italics).

Therefore, each narrative is particular to each individual. Whilst the specific discourses circulating in a society at any given moment may be decipherable, one can never assume the meaning given to them by individual actors. It is for these reasons that it is essential that social researchers explore and explicate *individual* narratives, rather than inferring from meta-discourses what they will look like (Somers and Gibson, 1994).

The research process

Initially, I had intended that my research further explore, in the context of Cape Town, the questions raised by Dolby (2001) in her seminal work in a high school in Durban. I wanted to look in more depth at how being in a racially diverse schooling environment affected the perceptions and constructions of difference in the identity narratives of students. I was therefore looking for a school that had a demographic which 'represented' the diversity of South Africa. I also wanted the school to be a government school as opposed to a fee-paying school, so that the schooling environment was directly shaped by government educational policies.

The Directorate of Education Research at the Western Cape Department of Education provided a list of public schools with 'diverse' student populations. However, upon contacting these schools and explaining my research, I was met with the following comments: 'Ja, we had a handful of white students but they've all left', 'We're a bit short on white students now' (Phone calls, 30/08/07). These are all formerly 'white' schools, as the majority of formerly 'coloured' and 'black' schools are in their respective, racially segregated residential areas. Soudien (2004b) notes the 'flight of people classified white into the independent school sector', yet also the influx of middle-class black parents into former 'white', middle-class, areas. This was supported in a frank discussion with Dr Cornelissen at the Directorate, who stated that there are actually very few racially 'mixed' public schools in Cape Town, and that these are only in upper middle-class areas (Phone call, 30/08/07).

Cape Town is the oldest urban area and the third largest metropolitan area in South Africa (Saff, 1998). Prior to the apartheid *Group Areas Act* in 1950, it was the least racially segregated urban area in sub-Saharan Africa (Western, 1996), with the Cape Town city council managing to resist implementation of the Act until seven years after it had been passed (Saff, 1998). The *Group Areas Act* aimed for the complete residential segregation of apartheid's 'race' groups. In Cape Town this involved moving people classified as 'Coloured' out of central Cape Town and the Southern suburbs. The most notorious forced removals were of fifty-five to sixty-five thousand 'coloured' people from District Six in the city bowl (Saff, 1998:86) to the east of the city, where what housing was constructed was thoroughly inadequate for the numbers. For example, in 1989, Mitchell's Plain, a 'Coloured' area south-east of the city centre, had over 226 000 residents, yet only 33 335 houses had been built

(*ibid.*). A 'Coloured' labour preference policy in the Cape meant that there was nearly no housing constructed for 'blacks', who were pushed to peripheral areas South East of the city, where shacks were constructed on exposed coastal sand dunes (Saff, 1998). The majority of 'black' and 'coloured' people still live in massively over-crowded, low-quality housing (Rospabe and Selod, 2006).

The dissimilarity index is a measure of racial segregation in cities, with 0 meaning each population group is proportionally represented in each area, and 100 meaning complete segregation. Under the *Group Areas Act*, Cape Town became the most segregated city in South Africa, with the dissimilarity index between 'whites' and 'coloureds' rising from 51.52 percent in 1921 to 95.13 percent by 1985 (Saff, 1998:85). Rospabe and Selod (2006:267) note how

> 'It is striking that the level of residential segregation between any two population groups in 1996 is correlated with the 'racial distance' between these two groups in the old apartheid classification',

with the dissimilarity index between 'whites' and 'Africans' in 1996 being above 92 per cent. These patterns have continued (Bekker and Leildé, 2002; Rospabe and Selod, 2006).

In light of the segregated nature of Cape Town, I decided to re-orientate my research to explore the identity narratives of young South Africans who are not in 'rainbow nation' schools; that is, not in schools in the upper middle-class, relatively (if superficially) 'integrated' suburbs. The majority of people formerly classified as 'black' and 'coloured' still live in the residential areas they were forced into by the *Group Areas Act*, with the corresponding class inequalities (Seekings and Natrass, 2005). I decided I wanted to explore how students coming from these areas into former 'white' schools in the city were understanding the diversity and challenges that met them.

Pseudonyms will be used to refer to the schools and students to protect the anonymity of the participants. I chose two formerly 'white' schools in the heart of historical Cape Town. The student populations have changed dramatically; Protea High is now predominantly 'black' and Panorama High predominantly 'coloured', with a handful of 'white' pupils at each school. However, these schools are strikingly diverse, attended by students from many different residential areas and social classes. Any urban site is traversed by multiple 'routes' (Clifford, 1997); historical, contemporary, cultural, personal and political, as people and their histories have moved through that site and left their mark. These two schools were selected as they

form particularly complex sites, at which many different historical and contemporary routes overlay each other, intersecting and colliding.

The majority of students travel for over two hours each day, taking public transport into the city from across the Cape Flats, a vast area to the east of the city centre that incorporates the former 'African' and 'Coloured' informal settlements of apartheid. Coming into 'town' on a daily basis, the students are exposed to a landscape that is very different from their home environments; visually, materially, and discursively, peopled by students and teachers with diverse life experiences and worldviews. These schools therefore provide a rich site for the study of youth identity in South Africa, as the students are being drawn out of their familiar local environments at a critical time in their lives, adolescence, and are making sense of who they are in an urban arena infused with many different perspectives. I chose to work with students ranging from 16-18 years old, who are entering adulthood, considering their futures, and facing choices about who they want to be in the world.

I was made very welcome in both schools. I was in and out of the schools on a regular basis for a total of six months. For the first two weeks, I spent time with teachers and pupils during break-time, explaining what I was in the school for and having general discussions about the school. I expressed my central intention to the students as wanting to know 'where they are at'; what issues, identity and otherwise, they are struggling with in and out of school, what their thoughts are on the 'rainbow nation' and South Africa, what inspires them, etc. I invited students to participate in focus groups and interviews, and all participation was voluntary. I was also invited on some social outings after school. Students were enthusiastic, as it was a chance for them to voice both their fantasies and frustrations. Being relatively 'young' myself, the students were friendly and open with me and we quickly developed a rapport. There are undoubtedly the silenced 'voices' of the majority of pupils at the school who I did not engage with, and who did not engage with me. However, the research is not attempting to offer a survey of the full range of perspectives within the school, let alone of youth identity in South Africa. Instead, it is looking more closely at the processes of individual identity formation.

Power and Reflexivity

Reflexive awareness is a critical dimension of research processes involving interviews (Erasmus, 2000b; Kvale, 1996; Seibold, 2002; Somers and Gibson, 1994;

Wengraf, 2001; Wetherell, 2003). A central question for me has been how the students perceive me, on many levels. My father is English and my mother is Indonesian Chinese, and people often struggle to 'place' me, especially given that my accent is inflected with British, South African and American tones. In the schools, I was perceived as a young, privileged, foreign woman, and addressed as 'Miss'. I asked to be called 'Sarah', which happened once students felt more comfortable around me. The identities, subjectivity and agency of the researcher shape the outcome of the interview as much as those of the participant, as:

> 'You do not leave behind your anxieties, your hopes, your blind spots, your prejudices, your class, race or gender, your location in global social structure, your age and historical positions, your emotions, your past and your sense of possible futures when you set up an interview, and nor does your interviewee when he or she agrees to an interview and you both come nervously into the same room.' (Wengraf, 2001:3)

The interview is an interplay between the researcher's and the participant's subjectivities, and thus a 'co-creation' (Erasmus, 2000b), 'jointly produced' (Chase, 2005; Wengraf, 2001; Wetherell, 2003), and an 'active emergent process' producing a 'negotiated text' (Fontana and Frey, 2005:706). This is not to say that power relations are equal, but fluctuating, as in all social interactions, where 'interactional goals and strategies' (Wengraf, 2001:3) collide.

One of my earliest experiences at the school was quite intimidating. On my third day in Protea High, as I entered the main hall where a substitute teacher was attempting to control over sixty students, nearly all the young men in the room stood up and started wolf-whistling, calling 'lady, lady!', 'China!', and 'China lady!', and making sexual innuendos at top volume. They had asserted their gendered power to humiliate me, and I left the room feeling very exposed. There were other, less hostile, ways in which the students held power. A participant in Erasmus' (2000b) research asserted her power through withholding information until they had negotiated a trusting relationship. Students were similarly aware that I needed their help. However, as I withstood some of their 'tests' of my character (such as if I could speak any Xhosa), and was open with my intentions, trust and a sense of a common goal of understanding was built up with groups of students.

Fontana and Frey (2005) describe how the hierarchical relationship of the interview is being reformulated by researchers; an acknowledgment of and engagement with the emotionality of the process delivers rich results. By setting a tone of accountability and respect, power relations can be exposed and sensitively

negotiated (Erasmus, 2000b). However, these relations of power cannot be neutralised in order for the 'authentic' voice of the participant to emerge; a reflexive narrative approach 'aims not for establishing authenticity but rather for creating a self-reflective and respectful distance between researchers' and narrators' voices' (Chase, 2005:665). Different combinations of subjectivities produce surprising and revealing results (Erasmus, 2000b; Fontana and Frey, 2005), and this does not work to 'distort' the data, but provides deeper insight into the social dynamics at play. Being from such a different social background to these students was productive, as we had to explain ourselves to each other.

Kvale (1996) discusses the ethics of interview processes, and argues for informed consent, confidentiality, and a full understanding of the consequences of the interviews and research for all involved. Consent was sought from all participants and their legal guardians, who were given an information sheet clearly detailing the intentions and nature of the research, all the activities that would take place, and the potential consequences of the research on the participants (Appendix 1). In addition, a list of nearby, free counselling services was given to all participants before their interviews.

Focus Groups

Whilst the interview situation is a very specific, 'artificial' interaction, and different to how interviewees would speak to friends or family, Wetherell (2003:13) argues that interviews are 'in no sense self-contained', and the participant

> 'draws on routine and highly consensual (cultural/normative) resources that carry beyond the immediate local context, connecting local talk with discursive history. The speaker weaves the available threads and voices differently on different occasions...but speakers do not invent these resources each time.'

Interviews can therefore provide insight into the discursive resources and patterns operating in society. This is particularly the case with focus groups, in which the group setting enables different voices to interact (Babbie, 2001), which allows 'for the proliferation of multiple meanings and perspectives as well as for interactions between and among them' to emerge, and this can 'decenter the role of the researcher' (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis, 2005:904). This was made very apparent once I conducted the focus groups, as frequently a question was posed to the group and I would just sit back and watch the rigorous debates that would ensue.

Six focus groups took place, with a total of forty-two participants. Purposive sampling was used in order to ensure that a range of perspectives were included. The composition of each group varied considerably, as a consequence of who I had asked, who had kept their promise of showing up, and if they brought their friends with them. Three groups were composed of very diverse individuals, with boys and girls of both 'race' groups, and the other three were 'homogeneous' in terms of gender and race, with either all girls or all boys, and all of a specific 'race'. Having both heterogeneous and relatively 'homogeneous' groups allowed for very different discussions, the first generally resulting in heated debates around racial issues at the schools, and the latter creating a safer space for more intimate and searching discussion. There was very dynamic interaction between different voices in the focus groups, as opinions and experiences clashed or affirmed each other. The discussions occurred in small conference rooms in the schools. The focus group interview schedule is Appendix 2.

Individual interviews

The individuals that were eventually involved in the in-depth narrative work were chosen for their diversity of positionings and perspectives. In-depth individual interviews took place over a month, with each participant being interviewed at least twice. I planned a list of questions and topics to be explored with all participants, across both interviews (Appendix 3). In the first interview, participants were invited to tell their life stories, through the lens of times or events that were particularly important in making them who they are. After the life story, I would ask the participants to expand upon certain elements of their narrative, asking questions from the interview schedule where relevant. I then transcribed and read all the first-round interviews to get a sense of the participant's life-world. In the second interview, I designed questions that would expand my understanding of certain elements of their identities, and also asked the rest of the questions from the interview schedule.

Individual interviews are the most common form of studying narratives (Andrews et al., 2000), however their form varies greatly. The interviewees were not conceived of as "informants" out of which to "extract data", which often results in heavily-structured interviews. Due to the nature of this research such an approach is inappropriate. The research process was conceptualised as a conversation between

myself and the participants about this moment in their lives. Interviewees are people with valuable experiences and insights to share as they tell their stories;

> 'To think of the interviewee as a narrator is to make a conceptual shift away from the idea that interviewees have answers to the researchers' questions and toward the idea that interviewees are narrators with stories to tell and voices of their own' (Chase, 2005:660).

These methods were therefore designed to understand the highly specific constructions of meaning in individual identities and to explore the discursive resources available to these individuals *where they stand*, as opposed to concluding that they are available to all youth in South Africa.

In addition to the interviews, all participants worked on 'identity boxes' or collages, firstly in a workshop and then at home. The 'identity box' is a method borrowed from youth work, where participants construct a box that represents themselves, using cardboard and magazines; the outside of the box represents how you appear to the world, and the inside of the box represents what the world does not see. Participants were also asked to write a list of what they wanted in their lives. I was hoping that being involved in the research would be a valuable experience for them, and at the end of the research I asked participants to reflect on the process, and was grateful for their responses. All participants had found it enjoyable, if challenging, but ultimately rewarding:

> *Sarah*: How did it feel to write that [*the 'I wants'*]?
> *Lindi*: Like I... I didn't realise that I could write these things so I got to know myself, my other self, that I didn't know...I think I found my inner self, and I think that I portrayed it and I have learned about myself in these interviews.

Many described it as 'therapeutic', a chance to voice many of their frustrations and to express, and crystallise, many thoughts about their identities.

Analysis

In qualitative research, analysis is continuous and occurs even as you are collecting the data (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This is a critical element to the 'investigator responsiveness' that Morse et al. (2002:10) argue is vital to establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research: 'ongoing analysis results in the dynamic formulation of conjectures and questions'. In this research the interview schedule for the individual interviews was shaped by analysis of the focus groups responses, and the second round of individual interviews was informed by a preliminary analysis of the first. Through continuous transcription throughout the

data collection process, I was sensitised to what needed to be explored further in the interviews. When all the interviews were completed and transcribed, I made myself familiar with all the transcripts, and then began the first stage of analysis.

A discursive analysis of all the transcripts (focus groups and individual interviews) was conducted. I analysed how participants spoke about and understood what was happening in the school and in South Africa at large. As argued by Seibold (2002:7),

> 'language, in the form of socially and historically specific discourses, cannot have any social and political effect except in and through the actions of the individuals who become its carriers'.

Therefore, emphasis was placed not only on *what* the participants said, but *how* they said it, what they were *accomplishing* in speaking in this way, and how they spoke in *different ways*. Attention needs to be paid to the very specific local contexts in which individuals are situated to understand what they are *doing* through talking, especially with regard to 'race' (Wetherell, 2003). Therefore, all transcripts were first analysed individually to determine the specific ways in which that/those participants spoke about and interpreted what was happening in their worlds. After this, the commonalities, contradictions and differences across the transcripts were identified, and quotes selected to represent this. In addition, notes from my time in the school were used as data. This allowed me to gain a sense of the discursive webs in which these students are embedded, which is presented as Chapter 4.

The second phase of the analysis was close narrative work with the individual interview transcripts of the six key participants. This involved analysing the transcripts for how participants interpreted their specific location and experiences, what narratives they told of their lives and identities, how they told these, and what discourses and imaginaries fuelled their narratives. Also incorporated into the data for the narrative analyses were the identity boxes and 'I want' lists. The final section of this chapter will detail the process of analysing the narratives. The actual analysis of each individual's narrative makes up Chapter 5, whilst Chapter 6 offers a comparative analysis of the collective currents in the identity processes of these six young South Africans.

Narratives are 'situated performances' and constitute 'social action' (Brockmeier and Carbaugh, 2001). Therefore, each individual's narrative *strategies* were identified (Chase, 2005:663). This allows for an appreciation of how each individual negotiates the multiple subject positions in which they are located.

Attention was paid to the narrator's *voices* (plural), as there is no 'authentic' self, but rather we live 'unsettled' and 'troubled' identities (*ibid.*). This is because we struggle through a process of making links between our personal experiences, and the discursive resources available for telling and understanding these experiences; looking for this process was central to the narrative analysis.

In acknowledging that the telling of narratives constitutes social action, it is important to ask what the nature of this action is, and whether it works to maintain, resist or remake the discourses upon which individuals are drawing. Carbaugh (2001:122) states that in analysing narratives we must ask 'what potent symbolic imagery is active', and what meaning this holds, in relation to the larger systems of meaning. I therefore identified the imaginaries that infused the individual narratives, as well as locating them in relation to South Africa and the world. Carbaugh (*ibid.*) goes on to say that in analysing narratives embedded in cultural meaning systems, one must ask

> 'What deeper meanings are getting expressed, what cultural philosophy is being presumed about what a person is (and should be), what actions can (and should) get done, how one can (and should) feel, indeed how one can (and should) dwell in places?'

These are critical questions in the analysis of the identity narratives of these young South Africans, who are faced with many contradictory and conflicting choices about who they should be and how they should be living. Again, through looking closely at the struggles within the individual narratives, these subtle negotiations can be revealed. Researchers must be attendant to the range of meanings held within the participants' narratives to ensure that both 'dominant and marginal readings of narrators' stories' come through (Chase, 2005:664), which allows for the complexity of identities to be expressed.

My analysis was heavily informed by the analyses offered to me by the participants, who engaged in the questions I was asking them with deep interest and concern; concern that they should show me and explain to me all that they could see happening in their social world, and within themselves. Saukko (2005:351) argues that the

> 'rarely stated but usually assumed presumption in poststructuralism is that "lay" people are blind to social discourses that guide them and that critical analysis of mediation can be executed only by an expert'.

The participants in the research were very aware of the ways in which they were being called to different positions, and often negotiated the difficult terrain

consciously and with great sensitivity. Whilst it is necessary to incorporate 'a self-reflexive awareness that both our understanding of other people as well as their understanding of themselves is mediated by social discourses' (Saukko, 2005:350), the participants provided critical insights that were invaluable to analysis in the research process. Therefore, in addition to contextual validity, in attempting to understand the life-worlds of others we must also incorporate a dialogic validity, which requires intimacy and creativity. And so, throughout the entire research process, it is vital, as introduced at the beginning, that 'experience, subjectivity, reflexivity, and dialogical understanding' (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2005:330) are maintained.

In the following chapters of analysis, the transcripts from which quotes were taken will follow the quotations. For example, (FG5) means Focus Group 5, and (Luvuyo 2) means the second interview with Luvuyo. A final note on terminology is required: in the analysis, 'black' and 'coloured' will be used when the perceived 'race' of an individual is a significant factor in discursive processes, as this is the language the students used. 'Coloured' students did not identify with the Black Consciousness notion of blackness, which incorporates any person of colour, and saw themselves as a distinct 'race' group. 'African' was not used with reference to 'black' students as this was not how they self-identified, and it may be seen to imply that 'coloured' students are not 'African'.

Chapter 4: Discursive Environment

For teenagers everywhere, school is a primary arena in which their identities are shaped. Soudien (2007:11) argues that it is critical to interrogate the way in which the institution of the school shapes 'the range of values they hold, their tastes, their ambitions and desires, their understandings of themselves and their relationships with others'. The specific atmosphere of each school plays a critical role in the way students will understand themselves and their relationship to the wider world.

This chapter will outline the ideological climate of the two schools, the atmosphere amongst the students and the specific ways in which they interact with each other, and the way in which the students are drawing upon the discursive currents circulating in South African society at large, and making them their own.

Panorama High

The hallways of Panorama High are lined with awards of merit from various government authorities. There is an air of well-maintained discipline, and at assembly time students sit in the central foyer, and appear to listen attentively to the speaker of the day. Early in my time at the school, I attended the highlight of the school's calendar, the annual beauty pageant, to find out how the school would present itself and its pupils. 'Mr and Miss Panorama High 2007' was a tightly choreographed, professional production, and had thirty-four sponsors, including national food and clothing brands. The theme was 'Under the African Sun', and the opening song was 'My African Dream', performed by an SA Pop Idol finalist. Contestants confidently strode in front of landscapes of savannah, cheetahs and sunsets, dressed in beige cloths, beads and leather, as shown on the next page. The image being projected was of a school which wholly embraces the role of its students in living the 'African Dream' of harmony in South Africa.

Fig.1: 'Mr and Miss Panorama High 2007: Under the African Sun'.

When reflecting on the atmosphere at Panorama High, Mbuyi commented:

> 'Honestly, I think to a certain extent this is what South Africa, I guess, *should* be like. But at the end of the day I feel like there's this...there's this layer. There's a lot of ignorance and tense feelings...looking down on other cultures also...There's a lot of negative emotions' (Mbuyi 2)

The image projected at the pageant is very much a veneer, as 'you won't see the majority of black people there' (FG6), or at the school discos, which black students argue only cater for the school's coloured majority. At the pageant, all the young male contestants were 'coloured', and enjoying their role as African warriors, in fake 'animal skins', bearing spears. However, this fits into highly problematic constructions of 'African', and 'black', in the school, were black students are constructed as inferior, particularly with regard to academic ability (FG5, Luvuyo 2).

In the excerpt below, William refers to 'black' people as 'tribal', and the stereotypes performed at the pageant by 'coloured' students tread a fine line between nationalism, exoticisation and racism. The following excerpt from a focus group is quoted at length to show the dynamics and tensions amongst the students:

> *Anna:* Everything's not right in this school
> *Lauren:* This one always complains [...] Don't get her started now.
> *May:* If I start then she's gonna talk, I promise you she's gonna talk. Ok, here's the racist thing [...] You'll get one or two blacks with coloureds, but in this school mostly it's just blacks and then coloureds.
> *Sarah:* You mean split?
> *May:* Yes. It's not that we *have* to sit like that, it's just that they obviously choose to be like that... they choose
> *William:* They choose [*mocking*]

Anna: Who?! How can you say 'they choose'? Everyone has choice [*angry*]
May: No, but I mean you *choose* to sit with your friends [*assertively*]
Lauren: Like you choose to be with your clique that you understand and you talk with…
William: Cos we can't click x x x x [*attempts to make Xhosa clicks*] There's like the tribe on one side and you'll find the others on the other side.
Anna: Can you see now! Calling people 'the tribes' now [*laughing from 'coloured' girls*] Can you see now, you starting William, it's early to start please!
William: But that's how it works in our class
Anna: Nuh-uh, don't call people 'tribe'! [*Lauren laughing a lot*] They know how to start up, and they like to speak like that, and it's not right!
Sarah: Please ignore them and tell me what you think [*others still laughing*]
Anna: What I think personally, I don't mind if anyone judges me or whatever they think about me, but… it's not only them calling people 'tribes' or whatever, some of us blacks we also call them coloureds…I don't know where the thing came from, but the racist thing, it is happening and it's a really big issue in school. Even the teachers, I have to go there, some of the teachers are racist. There is a racist problem in this school.

Anna was very distressed in this episode, yet this did not stop the coloured students from continuing to tease and laugh at her, consistently undermining her, regardless of the interventions I attempted. When everyone calmed down and she finally got her say, all students, black and coloured, agreed that racial divisions and racism are major problems in the school. In particular, they agreed that teachers were both failing to intervene in the racism, and actively partaking in it.

Protea High

Protea High is a far less affluent school than Panorama High, with teachers struggling with large class sizes and discipline problems. Classes were often cancelled, with students dismissed several hours early, and there were several robberies and fights in school. Teachers are proud of the anti-apartheid history of the school, which admitted learners of colour in the 1980s. However, racialised rhetoric is common; the school's problems stem from the 'flooding' of the school with students from the townships, with one teacher saying they act like 'gorillas' (Teachers FG). Similar stereotypes circulated in Protea as in Panorama High, explored in the next section. Students (coloured) and teachers said that black students were lazy and felt they were 'entitled to pass even though they do no work' (Teachers FG), because they 'hold onto apartheid and now no one's going to tell them [*what to do*]' (Esme 1). However, several teachers did speak with sensitivity about 'the social problems in the townships', and the way in which these are 'manifested in school' (Teachers FG).

Whilst these schools differ at first glance, the experiences of students in both schools were very similar. From this point forth in this chapter, the analysis is cross-cutting, with discussion referring to themes clearly identifiable in both schools.

Multiculturalism and Racism

In the classrooms, students will sit together and talk, but at break time they split into 'race' groups, of each gender, and these groups determine how an individual can and cannot behave: 'they'll define you by, if you a coloured they'll define you by what coloureds do, and what blacks do and what whites do' (Esme 1). This racial division is a source of frustration and embarrassment to some of the students, but is nevertheless a daily reality in both schools. When asked why they thought that their schools were so segregated, the students replied that linguistic and cultural differences were the problem, as well as residential segregation:

> *Luvuyo*: We all want the same thing to interact, to have a connection with people, but language barriers or lifestyles are sometimes too different and you just never meet [*punches one hand into the other*]...There isn't that common ground where you can say 'We all are one'. Yeah, we want that but... it's too different.

When asked about the experience of being in a diverse school, students spoke about how much they have learnt about 'other cultures': students use the 'softer' terminology of multiculturalism to speak about racialised differences, as Soudien (2004b) has found in other South African schools. In doing so, they are reframing, and *asserting*, difference in terms of 'culture' as opposed to 'race', as the studies by Dolby (2001) and Erasmus and De Wet (2003) found. Part of this is positive stereotyping, which nevertheless works to reproduce the divisions amongst students. Black and coloured students spoke of how 'Africans' or 'black people' are 'very talkative and friendly' (Peter 2), 'passionate, full of life, outgoing' (FG4), and 'they stand together' (FG2).

There were virtually no positive stereotypes of 'coloured' people. All students speak about how 'coloureds don't know who they are', and they have 'sort of taken on other people's cultures' (Mbuyi 2), with one girl commenting that 'we not white enough to be white or black enough to be black' (FG2). This reflects the discourses that circulate in South African society as a whole, due to the creation of the apartheid category 'Coloured' for people of diverse ancestries (African, Asian and European) who did not 'fit' into the categories of 'Native' (or 'Bantu') or 'White'

(Foster, 1991). It is only 'systematic and recurring practices of designation and separation [that] have cemented a distinctive community from heterogeneous elements' (Martin, 2001:249). As a consequence of these negative stereotypes, 'black' students often immediately identified themselves as 'black', whereas no 'coloured' students would self-identify as 'coloured', but would instead talk from a distance, about 'coloureds' as a group, when talking about their own communities.

In both schools, racialised joking and negative stereotyping amongst the students is the norm, and a primary cause of fights between pupils. 'Black people' are framed as 'loud', 'tribal', not 'civilised', and even teased by being called 'baboon'. 'Coloureds' all wear the same clothes, 'steal', and 'don't have any ambition'. Dolby (2001) shows how in Fernwood racialised joking promotes intimacy between black and coloured students, however both Dolby (2001) and Soudien (2007) show that is also symptomatic of racial tensions. The fine line between jokes and insults is often crossed in the two schools, and students described how the frequent racial conflicts are either sparked by intentionally aggressive and non-intentionally racist comments, or by other conflicts which 'get turned into a racial thing' (FG5), 'and then the Africans will come and the coloureds will come' (Peter 2), and the violence escalates.

Race/Class/Power

In both schools, the students in the minority 'race' group in the school feel marginalized ('coloured' students in Protea, and 'black' students in Panorama). However, racism leant heavily against the black students (acknowledged by all students), having a deeply demoralising effect on black learners. Teachers are nearly all 'coloured' or 'white', and students cited multiple instances of racism from teachers towards black students, with coloured students receiving preferential treatment. In Protea High, one student stated the following, which the others agreed to:

> *Mandisa* Whenever you go to the office and you black, the Deputy will always say 'You! Why don't you go to the township school! Why don't you go to the township school!' [*mimics her with a high-pitched voice*]
> *Sarah:* If you're in the office on your own with her what kind of things will she say?
> *Mandisa:* Yoh yoh yoh! 'You talking shit, you lying, you lying how can you say that!', and when your mother comes she pretends to be nice, 'You know we trying to help this child'. I wanted to strangle that woman.

In Panorama High, the headmaster framed black students as a problem; the school had been 'flooded from the townships', a phenomenon which 'even spreads out to Sea Point' (Interview with Headmaster, 11/10/2007), giving the school an 'unnatural population' for the demographics of the Province (even though the school is predominantly coloured). Reference to 'flooding' was also made at Protea, mirroring xenophobic discourses used against foreign Africans in the media (Harris, 2002).

Frequent references in interviews made to the lightness or darkness of skin reflect the ideological relationship that exists between skin colour, class and power. Lindi describes this below, highlighting the position of power that the teachers are in, and the effect they have on pupils:

> 'You tend to find when black kids have money and everything they more intimate with coloureds and...everyone wants to play white in school [...] The students think that being white is power and having money. It all comes down to the teachers, because we are influenced by them, if you are coloured or if you are white, then you better than the blacks. And so we take that and we put it in our minds you know, and we say to ourselves, OK, if I have this and I have that, and I'm a little bit light skinned, I'm better than you' (FG1)

Class tensions are being ascribed to, and articulated through, race. If you are a black student who speaks with an 'Englishy' accent, however you acquired it (through parents, schooling, television), accusations will follow that you think you are better than your peers. Words such as 'coconut' (black on the outside, white on the inside) and 'chiz boy/girl' (cheese, which is yellow) are used to harass anyone seen as 'playing white'. There is a clear tension between what the dominant institutional culture of the school demands (valuing 'whiteness'), and what the students demand of each other (resistance to anything that is seen as 'playing white').

Violence/Power/Race

In high school, students are constantly assessing their own, and others, social standing. This process is exacerbated in these two schools because of the violence that shapes many of the student's home communities. Whilst the climate of violence is more pronounced in Protea High than in Panorama High, both schools are attended by students who come from communities in which there are high levels of poverty, unemployment, domestic violence, abuse, and gangsterism (Salo, 2004; Soudien, 2004a). Each male individual interview participant had either been stabbed or seen a friend die violently, and all had friends or relatives in prison. This translates into

aggressive school environments, which are heavily gendered and racialised, where tensions are made worse by competition for material resources.

When asked who holds most power in the schools, the students replied that it was 'the people who favour the bad things' (Lindi 2), or those who are most closely connected to gangs (Luvuyo 2). There are fights amongst the young women, as inclusion and exclusion in the different friendship groups is fiercely policed, though the conflict is usually verbal. For the young men, social position and the ability to stand up for oneself in a physical fight are overlapped. They drew heavily upon hip-hop/gangsta rap terminology, speaking in terms of 'respect', 'alliances' and 'associates': 'if you don't have respect for somebody else, they not going to have respect for you, at the end you going to cause a fight between you' (Peter, 1). There is an ever-present threat of violence, which individuals have to negotiate their way around.

In this context, one has to constantly assess who is an 'associate' and who is a threat: 'you just look for your people with your kind of characteristics...cos you gonna get nowhere man alone' (FG5). The following quote, where Sive explores the racial divide between students, leads to a critical comment for theorising the relationship between race, violence and power:

> *Sive*: I think it's more of it's not their race, but it's their attitude, where they're at. Like I cannot go and sit with the coloured guys over there because there's nothing to talk about. The stuff that they enjoy, for me it would be like I don't get it. What's so fun about that. It's more of the 'where you come from' and 'what you like to do' [*than race*] it's like you stay to your own culture...
> *Max*: And respect whoever does not look like you
> [*They all laugh*]
> *Sive*: Yeah, the rule is respect.

These quotes give insight into how the context of violence in which the students are living interacts with the racialised discourses circulating in South African society at large. In an environment where you constantly have to assess who you can trust and who is a threat, any signifier of difference is identified and used to assert power. The first marker in South African society is a person's perceived 'race', and therefore you must be cautious and show respect to '*whoever does not look like you*'. This answers the question raised by Wetherell (2003) of what people are *doing*, in their specific local contexts, when they are employing racialised discourses. The meanings held within racialised discourses are activated in the schools in the context of violence;

perceived 'race' offers strategic allegiance and security for students of both genders, as well as a means of provoking violence.

'Looks' and labels

Bodily appearance is a critical site in which identities are constructed and affirmed (Dolby, 2001; Erasmus, 2000a; Giddens 1991; Woodward 1997). In addition to 'race', there were other visual markers of difference: gender, clothing and other indicators of wealth. The schools (in which all young women were referred to as 'chicks') were highly gendered, and sexualised, environments. At the Panorama High 2007 beauty pageant, the young men displayed their 'ripped' muscles, and the girls wore bikini tops and short skirts. On 'civvies' days at Protea High, 'you must dress like you a model on a runway' (FG2), and students describe the pressure to look good every day, and how this affects friendship groupings:

> *Amanda*: In the beginning of the year when new children come, they choose your beauty to become a friend of yours...How much money do you have, what phone you have, what clothes you wear, if you are pretty, things like that, like 'you not pretty enough to be my friend'.
> *Sarah*: So 'looks' is a big thing?
> *Amanda*: Especially among the blacks.
> *Thembisa*: Yeah, blacks.
> *Sarah*: You feel it's more hectic than with coloureds kids?
> *Ashley*: Actually, it's the same with coloureds, cos if your hair isn't slick enough then you not good enough.
> *Kate*: So your clothing, your fashion, defines how much money you have.

Many students feel disheartened as they cannot afford to buy fashionable clothes, let alone new uniforms as their bodies grow (FG2).

The reference to hair needing to 'slick enough' in the first quote shows the particular way in which bodies must be groomed and presented. Erasmus (2000a) describes the seventeen-step process of getting 'kroes' (frizzy) hair to be straight, and warns against simplistic readings into the politics of hair straightening by young women of colour. She says that for her it was a 'ritual of affirmation for me as a young black woman', and did not carry with it the desire to look 'white' (Erasmus, 2000a:386). Erasmus (2000a:388) argues that it is part of the process of creolisation, which 'entails reclaiming and living with fragments of origins and entanglements with whiteness, in the process of creating new cultural forms and practices, which do not have to be coherent and /or complete'. However, whilst some girls might *experience* hair-straightening as empowering, the historical origins of the process, and the way it

fits into dominant constructions of beauty in the media, cannot be dismissed, and neither can the fact that having 'kroes' hair in these schools has implications for who you can befriend and date. In the following quote, Bongani talks about why he was attracted to people with straight hair:

> 'That was the image that was painted in the magazine, they say you have to be this type of person, and I was attracted to that type of people, cos that's what I saw, that's what I thought you should be attracted to, and that went into my mind 'Ok she [*a 'white' girlfriend of his*] has straight hair so I like her', but black people were like...[*trails off*]'

Darling-Wolf (2004) explored how Japanese women experienced Westernised images of feminine beauty and showed how even though some of these women resisted and reinterpreted these images, they could not escape the desire to make their bodies match the images. In these schools, skin colour and straightness of hair are used to establish a hierarchy amongst students, and this is informed by the racialised concepts of beauty that dominate on a global scale.

Hip-hop/Gangsta rap vs. Rock

The style that dominates the lives of all the young men, and some of the women, is that of hip-hop: 'I like baggy stuff. A big T-shirt, double XXL, baggy jeans, a pair of sneakers, and a hat that's about to fall off' (FG3). Music is an important part of the lives of many of the students, and it sparked passionate conversations. The young men live and breathe the language of hip-hop, its music and mythology; they relate to the stories being told by African American hip-hop artists, and in them find the inspiration to see them through their daily struggles, particularly with violence. The rhetoric of resistance against the racialised oppression experienced in America has resonance with many of these individuals, and it is given new meaning in the South African context, as discussed by Battersby (2003). The American 'ghetto' and the South African 'township' become one imaginary space, with hip-hop providing a powerful inspiration to escape: 'imagine hardship, imagine everything... hip hop is the way out of that lifestyle, without hip hop it wouldn't happen' (Luvuyo 1). Different elements of hip-hop (the lyrics, the political message, the beats, the styles) have different resonance depending on the individual, as will become clear in the narrative section.

What is important to note is that there have been significant shifts in the 'taste' boundaries identified by Dolby (2001), where rock music was strictly for the

'white' students (though some 'white' students enjoyed gangsta rap). In Panorama and Protea Highs, female participants listed several styles of music in their favourite songs, including Bollywood. A sizeable minority of students enjoy rock music, and, whilst this is a cause for controversy (FG6), there is enough of them that share this passion and can assert themselves against the hip-hop/RnB (Rhythm and Blues) mainstream. When asked why they enjoy it so much, they answered, as with hip-hop, that it expressed where they are at, at this point in their lives, as well as expressing frustrations with 'mainstream' society. However, even though black and coloured students might both like hip-hop, or rock, and might occasionally dance to the same music on the dance floor, the barriers persist:

> *Bongani*: With South Africa now, everybody's listening to everything now. It's not like only black people listen to hip hop and this and that. Even house, it used to be a black thing, now coloureds listen to it. Even rock, it used to be only white kids listen to it. Now even I'm listening to it and my other friends. There's no one music that someone really owns nowadays, everyone listens to everything.
> *Sarah*: But doesn't that mean you will hang out together?
> *Bongani*: No.

Transgressing boundaries

Whilst the racial divide between black and coloured students does dominate the social landscape in both schools, there are many individuals in the schools who are constantly crossing these boundaries, either in terms of the imaginary spaces they occupy, such as through music, or actively in how they behave with friends. However, they may be met with hostility, and this limits how many people are willing to 'try to be between both' (Lindi, 2). All individual interview participants described how in group settings they often find themselves confronting racist comments made by their friends, and how they are often having to juggle or justify interactions across race boundaries, as described by Esme:

> 'when there's a racial argument then you must stick with your racial group, you're not allowed to stand up for anybody else...if you don't then there's something wrong with you, and then you an outcast and I don't think anybody wants to be an outcast, because it's not a nice feeling...But I'd rather be left alone than be grouped in with someone that is doing something negative' (Esme, 1)

There were several individuals who, through failing to affiliate with their own 'race', were alienated within their friendship groups, yet often then became friends with

others who had experienced similar frustrations, and felt more empowered from having asserted their personal values.

There is, therefore, resistance to, and within, the racialised boundaries. In this process, intimacies of resistance are developing, where those who are uncomfortable with 'the way things are' are finding each other (Mbuyi 1). Soudien (2007:15) draws on Erikson's theorisation of the importance of intimacy in youth identity, and this has resonance with the ways in which these students are carving out new ways of belonging and new ways-of-being for themselves. Many of the students spoke of different tensions that grew inside them when they first came to high school, and the split identities they had to maintain, such as between their inner values and those of their friendship groups, or between home and school. Many stand out in their home community, because of their uniforms and accents (Bongani 1, Lindi 1, Luvuyo 1). Some students resist the dominant English culture of the school by speaking Xhosa. For many of them, becoming 'one person, 24/7' (Luvuyo, 1) is a principal concern, and finding others going through similar struggles allows them to 'generate new identities in ways that provide for them a sense of integrity' (Soudien, 2007:15).

Many of the students were conscious of the way in which they were positioned as a consequence of their perceived race. Some students conveyed empathy in terms of understanding the struggles of 'race' groups other than their own, with Luvuyo commenting on how difficult it must be to be poor and white, as the stereotype is that white people are rich, whereas 'being black and African and poor, people get where you're from, if you're wealthy, we still get where you're from, you made it out of poverty' (Luvuyo 2). In saying that nobody will 'get where you're from' if you are poor and white, Luvuyo is articulating the way in which stereotypes operate to restrict the capacity for empathy and understanding that people can have for each other. There was heated debate around notions of 'blackness' and 'colouredness' in the focus groups, with many different interpretations and meanings being explored. What it means to be 'black' was particularly reflective of this moment in South African history; 'black' does not refer to a colour, but means power, pride, a hunger to succeed, and access to opportunities (FG4, Luvuyo 2). This contrasts with the meaning of blackness to the older woman in Motsemme's (2002) study, who related it to the community values she experienced under apartheid. This highlights the shifting nature of these constructs, and the struggles over their meaning

in contemporary South African society. Each student has a different location in this matrix.

Students had different ideas of why patterns of segregation were continuing in the school and in South Africa. Many students matter-of-factly stated 'culture', locating difference in the present. 'Stereotyping' was also commonly referenced. Others went deeper into historical processes, as shown in the following quotes:

> *Thembisa*: You know what bothers me so much. People say that apartheid is over. It is NEVER going to be over! [*Shouting, clapping hands*]
> *Esme*: It's over in law, yeah, but the people...it will never be over.
> *Natalie*: It's always the racist mindset.

> *Lindi*: Like, the way we living now, it's like history repeating itself. I think apartheid isn't gone or past or whatever...it's still rising. It's going to repeat itself, history always does, but it repeats itself in other ways or in other forms, you know, and right now it is, it is, it is [*repeating itself*]...

Lindi then explained herself as meaning that 'apartheid is still in and around us', and 'the way of thinking' came from 'long time ago'. Her belief was that if people did not name the problems, there would never be a way of dealing with them. Esme described how parents pass prejudice and resentment on to their children, who then 'stick to what they think they're supposed to be' (Esme, 1). Mbuyi argues that people need to begin to examine how their thinking contributes to blocking change:

> 'We're going through a lot of changes in South Africa and I think it's affecting us because our parents tell us something which we bring here to school and we don't share it with somebody else. I'm saying we walk around with the mentality of something negative about another race, about a human being, and it's deep inside us. Because we never talk about it, it will always be there and it will always stop us [...] we all walk around with a certain perception that white people are so and black people are so and that shouldn't be it [...] I think we have it in each and every one of us' (FG6)

These young women all believed that not having safe spaces to talk about the issues in the school meant that they would persist, indefinitely. These same students would draw on racist stereotypes when speaking about other 'race' groups, and could not escape the racialised thinking that they critiqued. They are the subjects 'caught between a desire to erase race but simultaneously invoking it at every turn' (Motsemme, 2002:658). There was a recognition by many students of the challenge they share in creating a different South Africa, but they did not believe that the changes would happen with their generation (if ever), though some hoped 'maybe in the next' .

However, there was a potentially critical difference in the two schools. As described earlier, Panorama High actively promotes the image of itself as a school in the 'rainbow nation', and even though there is racism in the school, it may be that having access to and participating in that imagery is having an effect on these students. Several Panorama students described a change they had felt, as summarised by Peter: 'Last year the school was starting to get beautiful man. I don't know why it was just.... joy, excitement, to come to the school. The Africans and coloureds started bonding, and they started talking, started hugging each other', and something shifted. Bongani talked about how a coloured girl had berated him for making 'is it because I'm black' jokes all the time, and how he had actually talked through the issues with her, and realised 'she does have a point, so ever since that day I never made a black joke again, cos I've really noticed that ok, everybody's the same' (see page 77). It appeared that a small but significant degree of openness had been reached, where students could firstly simply start to interact socially, but could also begin to speak about the tensions that exist between them. Protea High is a more antagonistic and violent space, and consequently students express significantly less optimism for overcoming racial tensions. This potentially supports Soudien's (2007) findings, where the ethos of the various schools is translated in the attitudes of its learners. However, even though this change occurred in Panorama, Mbuyi comments how it is still 'awkward', and their year group is 'so close but at the same time so far from each other...we still separate' (Mbuyi 1).

Living in the 'Rainbow Nation'

Students both embrace and critique the concept of the 'rainbow nation', a concept which contains 'too much incorrect stereotyping' (Luvuyo, 1), which has been 'overdone' and is 'pumped too much in our faces everyday' (Bongani, 2). Luvuyo believes that the timing was wrong, and that the 'rainbow nation' imagery that flooded the media in the 1990s, and still does, should only have come after years of reconciliation. Many of the students were also fiercely critical of the government, and spoke with irony and sarcasm about politicians and the 'Proudly South African' campaign, whilst claiming to be 'Proudly South African'.

The following excerpt shows some of the contrasting feelings that students have towards the 'rainbow nation', and also captures the texture of moments when young people do feel connected to it:

Sarah: Who do you think lives in the rainbow nation?
Xoliswa: I can say the people who have money and power can live in it, and us the people in the townships, the ghetto people, we don't.
Simphiwe: Uh-uh Xoli, we do live in it.
Lindi: We do live in it, but the people that have the money and power say 'ok, this belongs to the rainbow nation and that doesn't belong to it'... Hayi, for us in the townships we don't have that... But we *are* diverse in a way...so we do live in the rainbow nation.
Mary: The people who don't live in the rainbow nation are the people from Africa. Some or all of us do judge them. 'No, he's a kwerekwere' [*derogatory name for foreign Africans*]
Lindi: When I go to the Waterfront, and I see some dudes, [*imitates walking along and checking out some 'hot' guys*] and I'm wearing my nice sneakers, and they are too, I feel connected, like yeah! [*Everyone screams*]

The reference to the Victoria and Albert Waterfront, and to clothing, is important. The Waterfront, at weekends, sees families of all 'races' mingle with tourists amongst hundreds of shops, many of which sell expensive clothing from global brands. In the eyes of young South Africans, who receive 'rainbow nation' imagery predominantly through the media and advertising, the Waterfront represents the image of a 'new', transformed, and capitalist South Africa, whose citizens can enjoy access to globalised consumer culture.

One group of girls who I met up with several times discovered I have a digital camera. From then on they were always late, and I would find them in the school toilets getting dressed in trendy outfits so they could pose for photos. After a focus group, we went to my roof to look over Cape Town and two of them showed off their shoes, which were the 'Lacoste' brand:

Fig.2: 'Lacoste' shoes.

On this meet-up, they spent time spotting all the expensive cars from the five-star hotel opposite, naming the model and specifications. One girl said that when she steps out of her door, 'all you see is shacks shacks shacks, and all you smell is pollution. I would love to have this view Sarah, yoh!', highlighting how privileged my life is in comparison to theirs. These girls spoke frankly about how they cannot afford the clothing that they look at as they stroll around malls, but through a generous family member might occasionally manage to purchase an expensive label.

Only those with enough money can regularly access spaces with the diversity of which South Africa is so proud, due to the nature of racialised residential segregation and economic inequality (Rospabe and Selod, 2006). However, as described by Salo (2004) and Nuttall (2004a), by occasionally going to diverse, cosmopolitan spaces such as the Waterfront, by dressing and grooming bodies in particular styles, and through watching certain television shows and movies, these young people are imagining themselves both as part of the ideal of the rainbow nation, and as part of a global middle-class, framed by American values. Soudien (2007) reports on findings by the South African National Youth Survey (2000), that shows how even though many South African youth are living in conditions of poverty and violence, 88% are happy with their lives and 75% are optimistic about their future lives in South Africa, with Soudien commenting that 'the era of democracy is an era of new opportunity even if it is difficult to materialize this opportunity' (2007:44). The media plays such an important role in allowing the young people I interviewed to access empowered self-images, as they prepare themselves for a future where they will not be held back by poverty. This photo on the next page was my favourite, as it symbolises the positivity that burns out of them when they are dressed up and ready to go!:

Fig.3: At the beach.

When asked how they dream of their futures, every participant (except for Esme) in the focus groups and individual interviews, mentioned driving a luxury car and/or living in the exclusive residential areas of Camps Bay or Constantia. 'Making it in life', and living the lifestyle portrayed by popular American hip-hop artists such as 50 Cent and Dr Dre, involves fast cars, luxury flats, designer clothing, and 'girls money parties' (Luvuyo 1). The students' favourite TV shows were America's Next Top Model, Oprah, Friends, Nip Tuck and the like; very few mentioned locally produced programmes. Bongani put it succinctly when I asked him why he liked Friends so much, saying 'they're like being the picture of the type of life I want to lead...they don't like really worry about a lot, you know?'. Nearly all of the young women had Oprah as their role model.

Esme reads books recommended by 'The Oprah Book Club', such as 'The Secret' and 'Conversations with God'. Faith in a 'God' plays a fundamental role in the lives of many of the students. The growing attention to 'spirituality' in the media, and the access this provides to systems of belief from other parts of the world, has presented individuals with new ways of theorising their existence. For Esme, some books have 'gone against everything I have ever learnt about Christianity, and

everything that I stand for, and it's really hard to read, but if you read books like that then you need to open up your mind to new possibilities' (Esme, 1). Luvuyo's interest in karate led him to explore Buddhism when he was thirteen, and he is frustrated by African traditionalists, who promote traditions which he feels have no relevance to those living in urban areas, and will be of no benefit to his children, who will 'have to make it in life as an *individual*'.

It is now vital to return to Carbaugh's (2001:122) questions of 'what cultural philosophy is being presumed about what a person is (and should be), what actions can (and should) get done, how one can (and should) feel, indeed how one can (and should) dwell in places?'. These young people conceive of themselves primarily as individuals in the world, who, through hard work and persistence, can be successful in life, running businesses or becoming famous, living in exclusive residential areas, and driving luxury cars. 'Making it in life as an individual' was the dominant theme amongst nearly all the students, and reflects the liberal, capitalist values that permeate their society, values which are deeply 'raced' (Goldberg, 2002).

Peck (1994) critiques thirteen episodes of Oprah's talk-show from 1992, which focused on racism and the Los Angeles riots between African-American residents, local business owners and the police. Peck (1994:94) shows how 'liberal, therapeutic and protestant discourses' on the programme located racism in the individual, thus preventing any examination of the social and historical structures of racism and inequality in America, therefore closing off the potential for any collective political action. Taking into consideration the structural inequalities that persist in the South African context, and the fact that 'schools fail the bulk of young people' (Soudien, 2007:39), the chances are slim that all of these young individuals will 'make it' and purchase the cars and houses they desire, yet the liberal self-help discourses propagated in Oprah's shows posit that they will only have themselves to blame (Peck, 1994). Oprah replied to one black audience member who admitted to looting because he had no other means to survive: 'Who says you're supposed to have it?' (*ibid.*:117).

What will it take for some of these young people to 'make it'? Doing well in school is vital to gaining access to the business careers that most of these young people aspire to. Wildman and Davis (2000:53) articulate how 'members of society are judged, and succeed or fail, measured against the characteristics that are held by those privileged'. Whilst 'race' is no longer strictly synonymous with class in South

Africa (Seekings and Natrass, 2005), and affluent schools have increasingly diverse student populations, 'the dominant approach of all [former white English-speaking] schools to the inclusion of children of colour...is that of white middle-class assimilation' (Soudien, 2007:77). Whiteness structures the norms and values of these two schools, and determines who will be listened to in class. This creates great tension as students who are seen as 'playing white' are teased, whilst those who feel alienated from the culture of the institution barricade themselves behind their own language and cultural codes. One student, in trying to understand the racial divides in the school, stated the following:

> 'What I don't understand about this racial thing is, they're saying it's about apartheid. Whatever. Apartheid was between blacks and whites, I see no whites in this school [...] it was blacks and coloureds together, against whites [...] maybe they [*coloureds*] think they whites, so they should be against blacks, or maybe blacks think coloureds are whites and they should be against them [...] But I don't get it, there are no whites in this school'.

This student has identified the ways in which the 'race' thinking of apartheid, where people of colour were pitted against one another, continues in these schools, which are haunted by whiteness. Whilst they don't have to *be* 'white' to succeed, whiteness exerts a heavy influence on the choices they make about who they should be, if they want to get anywhere in this world. The next chapter explores the struggles that six individuals are facing as they try to make these choices, and negotiate the terrain that has been laid out in this chapter.

Chapter 5 – Individual Narratives

This chapter will present each identity narrative individually. Identity box/collage images are only included where they expanded the understanding developed through the narrative accounts. The '1 wants' lists are included as Appendix 4, and provide valuable insight into participant's lifeworlds.

"Nombuyiselo (Mbuyi)"

[Panorama High]

'I think for me in my mind I've go this odd definition of what black is, cos I've given up trying to figure it from other people...when I say I'm black, this is my culture, and this is where I come from. My country has suffered a lot and my people have suffered a lot. I mean a lot of black people have suffered, therefore I'm this black that Steve Biko wanted, and I'm trying to be this black that Nelson Mandela wanted, and I'm trying to be this black that is sort of what my ancestors prefer or would want me to be. I am black, and extremely proud of it. This is what I've defined black as... this is who I am'

Mbuyi's narrative of her life story is framed by a struggle to understand her 'blackness', as the meanings of the signifier 'black' changed around her as she moved through different schools. Her story highlights the intersubjective, relational and emotional (Crossley, 1996; Henriques, 1998) construction of identity, as the prejudice she experienced in different schools, shaped the identity she would eventually claim for herself.

Mbuyi was born in Welkom, Free State, and spent her early childhood living with an aunt as her parents were away searching for work. This caused her a great deal of trauma, as she would often have to do housework as a child, and desperately missed her parents. Eventually her family was reunited and they moved to Parow East, Cape Town. Even though the family of four was living in one room, she describes it as one of the happiest times in her life. It was at this point that she began primary school, and first came to understand that she was 'black'.

Her father was determined to enrol her in the nearby primary school. The school was nearly exclusively attended by 'white' children, though 'there was a couple coloured'. Upon approaching the school gates for the first time, her father was told 'No, we're not buying anything' (to which he replied 'No, I'm not selling anything'), and the headmaster attempted to dissuade him, saying that Mbuyi would be more 'comfortable' elsewhere. Her father succeeded in enrolling her, and she was

the first black Xhosa-speaking girl at the school. Her name became 'Mbuyi', which it remains in school until today, as 'white' and 'coloured' teachers struggle to pronounce Nombuyiselo. Whilst she supports her father's decision to send her there, Mbuyi describes this time as a really 'negative spot', as her self-confidence was very low:

> 'I didn't know at that age you should be...it's not that you should be with your own people, it's just that certain things confuse you. Cos *you've grown up in a different type of culture, and you might think it is yours* and you might want that culture. You don't want it as such but *it's like in you now*, you can't help it so...it was tough for me because there was discrimination...the other kids didn't understand... and *I never knew that I was different* from other kids...I mean you can't be Chinese and go to a Xhosa school, you know? Definitely you gonna be emotionally depressed... deep down inside there was something missing' (my italics)

Here, Mbuyi locates culture in upbringing, and shows how it is only upon coming into contact with others not of the same upbringing that she realised she was 'different'. Her troubles in secondary school, when she was confronted with her 'own people', deepened her understanding of how fluid culture can be.

Moving to secondary school was equally, if not more, fraught, as the Xhosa girls that Mbuyi was grouped with had a completely different 'mindset' to her own. Mbuyi understood their differences as a moral one, and conflicts arose around drinking, smoking and having boyfriends, which Mbuyi refused to participate in. Girls within her own friendship group called her a 'coconut', on account of how she spoke English, and accused her of being 'coloured'. She became increasingly unhappy and depressed:

> *Mbuyi*: I mean this other chick asked me 'why aren't you like us? I mean 'why aren't you like us'?!
> *Sarah*: What did you say?
> *Mbuyi*: How do you answer a stupid question like that?...People would judge me and who I was, and look down on me and I felt I was in a place that I did not want to be, but at that time I felt like I had no choice [...] there was no reason for me not to be hanging out with coloured people that I felt comfortable with at that time, but...for me it was like I wouldn't have fitted anywhere...I had nowhere to go. So that was hell.

She realised she would have to define her own identity, or she would be forever pleasing whichever party was attempting to exert power over her:

> 'The thing is with being Xhosa, I always thought that being Xhosa was so and so, but then you get to high school and it's not. So now it's not being Xhosa, but being Mbuyi, you know, Nombuyiselo...it's an individual thing'

These experiences have made Mbuyi very critically aware of how 'race', 'culture', and 'identity' are constructed; firstly, in upbringing (see Mbuyi's quote on page 46 also), and secondly, through how you as an individual define yourself, as shown in the opening quote and above.

Mbuyi speaks about how young South Africans are not only carrying around the negative 'stuff' inherited from parents, but are also 'carrying a lot of stuff from now', because of the 'worse battles we have to fight now', such as violence, drugs, and HIV/AIDs. She remarked upon how 'amazing' it was that students 'even manage to be in the same room' together, given how much psychological baggage they are each walking around with.

Three internal worlds have sustained Mbuyi through her friendship struggles in secondary school: Black Consciousness, her imagined future, and God. Her father encouraged her to read Steve Biko, which resonated with the struggles she was facing in school, and taught her to 'love herself' as she was, irrespective of others judgements of her. Mbuyi believes that the reason why Panorama High, and South Africa, are so segregated is that people don't know and understand 'where they have come from', and consequently, 'who they are'. In particular, 'we as black people' have not remained faithful to the vision of those who fought in the freedom struggle.

Mbuyi has always dreamed of becoming a TV presenter, and after much persistence, managed to shine her way through a very competitive audition. Being a TV presenter for various youth shows ('I'm like a little Oprah') has helped her confidence enormously ('would you like my autograph now?' she said). Mbuyi often daydreams about 'what the future has to offer', not only in terms of her career, but also what the texture of everyday life would be like if she 'makes it'. She fantasises about living in a 'big big big house', and 'how much it's going to cost me to put petrol in that Mazda'.

During the time when she felt the most pain and anger at school, Mbuyi began to read the Bible, and 'Bang!, I was in the zone'. Her newfound faith presented her with several challenges, as it added another layer to the many aspects of her self that she struggles to integrate, a challenge Soudien (2007) argues many young South Africans are facing. This is shown below:

> *Sarah*: What parts of your identity are most important to you?
> *Mbuyi*: I feel like I'm a combination of old skool and nu skool. I believe so much in my tradition and my ancestors, and then again I believe so much in God. And then I'm also this person that's just taking in everything around

> me. It's like who am I as Mbuyi? And then who am I as Mbuyi who believes in the ancestors and tradition and blah blah blah? And who am I as Mbuyi that believes in God, and has that faith? And then who am I as this person that comes to school every day with this certain mentality and emotions and vibe and the things that go around me? So there's so many things that are happening that are forming this identity and one day I'll probably conclude it but for now I'm just flowing, I'm just flowing, learning I guess.

Mbuyi narrates the past as a process of coming to 'know herself', through defining who she was against others' claims on her identity. Mbuyi has a complex understanding of the way in which she has been born into a particular 'race' at a particular moment in history, and the way in which the position she currently occupies is very fluid, as shown above. This causes her distress, and she often would speak about a desire for some fixity, whilst acknowledging its impossibility:

> 'I'm just there, floating around, and...all of a sudden, I'm not there, I'm not Mbuyi anymore...So I don't know where God is taking me at the moment, I'm not sure, I just hope I'm going to get there really soon and can conclude my life... but I don't think...It's a never-ending cycle'

Her hope is that she will be able to find some resolution between the many facets of her identity that often conflict, so she wants:

> 'mostly just to find me in everything else I guess. Just to be one, where I have all these things but it's not a problem anymore cos I've just found...I've just found this balance'.

"Luvuyo"

'(a.k.a. Hurricane: ask y coz I don't know my damn self)'

[Panorama High]

'My ultimate role model right now, it has to be Dr Dre...He comes from a rough neighbourhood but he made it... Compton, America. Where he's from, I think it's even worse than here, but some of the things worse here, some worse there. As he grew up he made it out. There's a song where he mentions 'take young leaders out the hood, take their minds out the hood', and where I'm from, the more I think that, I get that hope of 'there has to be more to this'. He inspired me in that way. Making me want to succeed. Whenever I feel down, or I just strayed from my vision, I listen to his tracks or look up his picture. He's my ultimate inspiration cos I have to get out there. There's two things: either you make it or you don't make it. If you don't make it you stay trapped. If I make it I want to...Cape Town's a beautiful place. I want to be like 'my child, look at the view' [looks out of the window at Cape Town below] *and I want to have a family, be a family man, and I don't want my child to grow up where... 16 years later, I'm like 'where's my son?', and people telling me he got shot, he got stabbed. I want to be a good father figure for my son.'*

Luvuyo's way-of-being in the world, and his self-identity, have been shaped by the permanent threat, and presence, of violence in his life. He has had to continually assess this threat, and negotiate his actions and identities accordingly, to protect himself. Luvuyo tells his story as one of going 'from bad to good', as he reassessed the choices he needed to make in his life, 'to keep myself alive'. Consequently, over time, he has asserted his wishes against those of his friends more and more. Whilst nearly all of them dropped out of school or are in prison, Luvuyo is now trying to focus on his studies and 'making it'.

Luvuyo has understood his experiences, and negotiated his way through a maze of choices, through hip-hop. He has a CD which is 'a compilation mix of all my great songs but at the same time each one reminds me of a phase in life or a phase I still have to go through', and it features the African American artists Dr Dre, Game, Jay Z, Snoop Doggy Dog, Biggie and Tupac. The message he takes from this hip-hop imaginary ('ghetto' lives transformed through 'making it') is central to how he narrates his past, present and future, providing him with a storyline that will allow him to transcend his circumstances. 'Dying to live' asks what the point is in life if you are 'fighting to live but in matter of fact all you going to do in life is just fight'. 'Staring at the world through my rearview' has inspired him to 'step back a bit and look at the scene' when he is drinking and partying, and ask 'tomorrow, what's the point in this?'.

'Live and die in LA' reflects Luvuyo's complicated relationship to the place that has made him who he is, Litha Park in Khayelitsha, and he changes the lyrics to 'Live and die in Khayelitsha'. He lived in Gugulethu, then moved to Litha Park, Khayelitsha, which was 'a blessing from the sky', as he had been on a path to joining a gang and ending up either dead or in prison. In Gugulethu, 'it's all the hype, you must attend all the parties, but once you stop...are you still alive?'. He says 'Litha park made me the person that I am', as it was here that 'I told myself now I don't want to live a lifestyle where I have to rob people, shoot people, stuff like that, that's not me, and at the same time not sophisticate myself meaning like looking down on people'. Litha Park forms the strongest tension in Luvuyo's identity, as a place he both swears loyalty to, and is trying desperately to escape.

In Litha Park there are 'skollies' (gangsters), 'scwetsis' (who are into fast cars and girls, 'flashy guys'), 'majita' ('the middle people') and 'lostos' (who are confused by their situation and simply 'lost'). Luvuyo describes himself as a 'majita': 'I'm a normal guy, average guy, average school. Just average'. This desire to project himself as a 'normal' guy follows from his belief that if he does not draw attention to himself, he will escape the violence of his surroundings. Luvuyo has built up a series of 'fronts' which he can take refuge behind. The difference between seeing him in school and being in individual interviews was striking. In school he was either in his self-described 'clownish type of persona' (which he fuels by watching his favourite TV show, 'Whose Line Is It Anyway?'), or in his 'serious face', which operates to close him off from his surroundings.

The songs 'Sky's the limit' and 'Imagine' reflect Luvuyo's desire and determination to make it out of Litha Park, and to take his mother with him, building a stable family where he is good example to his son, something Luvuyo's father never was. Poverty has been a constant presence in their lives, and he hopes to be able to take the burden of supporting the family from his mother onto himself, so that she can 'sit down and take a rest'. When I asked him what kind of life he would like to live, he replied with emotion, saying 'a life where like I could drive around man, where I don't live in fear', a 'city life' where he can 'throw dinner parties' and where 'everything will be feeling alright'.

The other main tension in Luvuyo's identity is formed by the two spaces of school and home. When he first came to Panorama High, he had a mentality that had been shaped by his home community, of 'just waiting for someone to mess with me'.

Whilst he was involved in many fights in school, he has recently become more comfortable in the school environment. Now, 'at home I have to have the persona of like if you confront me you have to expect trouble, and at school I have the persona of being like 'ok everybody's friendly''. Switching between the two spaces causes him strain, as they 'sometimes clash', and he prefers being on neutral territory where he can melt into the background.

The song that Luvuyo related to the most was by Game which is entitled 'One Night'. Luvuyo compares himself to Game as 'we kind of brothers looking up to the same father figure [*Dr Dre*], in a funny way'. 'One Night' tells the story of when Game was shot and 'half of his friends turned their back on him'. On Luvuyo's 'One Night', earlier this year, his grandfather had just died and he was drunk at a party when he accidentally lost his friend's earring, and was then stabbed twice in the shoulder and chest by that friend. Luvuyo describes the stabbing as his 'final turning point', as it taught him to 'just calm down, to talk calmly to people, and just rationalise things'. He realised he had to integrate and transcend all his different personas, as 'I can't be this and this and that; I have to be this one person, 24/7'.

Luvuyo is engaged in the task of defining his own identity, to overcome the identities he feels are being imposed upon him. He has a complicated relationships to being Xhosa, as he's 'not really that rooted Xhosa, since I'm living in urban areas'. He speaks 'slang Xhosa' at home, and is more fluent in English from school. He feels 'being urban contradicts' his traditions. In the interviews he spoke about how after his 'final turning point', he 'returned to my teachings'. His 'teachings' refer to a time at the end of primary school when he was engrossed by karate, and consequently read books on yin-yang, Karma and Buddhism. In connecting to these 'teachings', he realised that they were 'kind of similar to my thinking...I don't understand my culture in depth, but I understand this in a way', and so for Luvuyo, the emphasis on balance and calmness in Buddhism is of more value in his daily struggles with violence.

In constructing his identity, Luvuyo picks and chooses from whatever speaks to him in music, television or literature, yet this is all framed by his struggle to survive in the urban arena. The meanings within Buddhism and African-American hip-hop are activated in the particular context of his life, as they resonate with his experiences and aspirations. In identifying with Buddhist philosophy, he is claiming validity for his desire to be a different identity to that which young men in his home community are confined to. He speaks of how in

> 'all these contradictions, you have to choose which best suits your lifestyle. It's not like they all wrong and yours is the wrong one, but you have to choose the best one for you...It's just a balance'.

As with Mbuyi, he is also balancing between many worlds, refusing to live conflicting identities, and is attempting to transcend the divisions that mark his life and form an integrated sense of self.

"Peter"

[Panorama High]

'My brother and them never had a life like I had, and I just want to be the best in my family just to show them an example of what their life would have been if they never took the road... that other path of taking wrong friends and that. And nothing can stop me because I've been with nice people, nice family and everything. My dream is to be in London with my brother and maybe get married to a nice English girl, and I'd like to be a chartered accountant, and I have a feeling nothing will stop me'

Peter's life is framed by the need to live the life his brother and other family members couldn't, through their having been brought up under apartheid (parents), or through their having made the wrong choices in life (brother and cousins). Coming from a very tight-knit family, his actions and goals are closely interwoven with the stories of his family members. His older brother was 'the fastest in Mitchell's Plain in athletics', yet he fell in with the wrong crowd, and was imprisoned briefly. After this, his parents sent the brother to family friends in London. Peter, the youngest in their family, has picked up where his brother left off, and has a successful athletics record, representing the Western Cape at national athletics finals. Speaking about his brother, and about his winning various races, were the moments in the interviews where Peter would become completely absorbed in his narrative and enact entire episodes of his life. Two stories in particular give insight into how Peter tells the story of his identity.

The first story reflects Peter's connection to, and passion for, hip-hop, as it tells the story of his and his brother's life, and their community. He has 'MTV Base' at home, the MTV channel for hip-hop and RnB (Rhythm and Blues), which he watches everyday when he comes home. His favourite singer is the American artist Chris Brown ('He's the best!'), who's picture is the background image on his mobile phone. Peter describes how 'America has the best music', and says he wouldn't listen to music if it were not for American music, and hip-hop. He says

> 'Your dreams is always to become like them. You have a daydream and you think 'Yoh! What if I was to be like Chris Brown, and I'm singing!', and then you start singing in your mind like him'.

Peter was inspired by Chris Brown in particular after having watched a film called 'Stomp the Yard'. Peter told the story of the film as if he was telling the story of his own life, and recounted to me in detail every stage in the film's narrative. In the film, Chris Brown and his brother, DJ, are part of a premier hip hop dance group. After one dance competition in the beginning of the film, Chris Brown is shot dead,

> 'And so DJ was determined to be everything that his brother was. His brother told him that DJ must go to school, and must grow up in a nice way and all that, like my brother told me.'

After describing the various twists and turns in the plot, Peter described and enacted the climax of the film, doing some of the dance moves. DJ wins the final dance battle, and 'he was the best, and so they won! Now that's...I'm determined if I want to be the best in the sport or in the school, I'm determined that I will reach that!'. As with Luvuyo, Peter is inspired by the 'making it' narrative of hip-hop celebrities, and this film in particular deeply inspires him because it parallels the story of him and his brother.

The focus of Peter's 'being the best' involves a great deal of attention to his body. Peter's 'body project' (Woodard, 1997) involves the cultivation of a muscular physique through playing sport, participating in the Panorama High beauty pageant, and wearing the latest 'styles'. Sport is the main focus of Peter's life. The second story that Peter enacted was of a race at the national athletics finals that was 'going to determine if I'm the best or not the best'. Playing sport (which includes soccer, swimming and snooker in addition to the athletics), keeping fit, and pushing his body to the limits gives Peter a deep feeling of satisfaction, achievement and peace. Peter is very proud of his body, and enjoys participating in the school's beauty pageants. In the 2007 finals, the producer told Peter that he would enjoy the African Dream theme, as they were 'going to use my body and all that, show it'. Peter was 'Shaka' in the pageant, and he stood on a raised section at the back of the stage, holding a spear and shield, surrounded by girls, and with his well-oiled body on display: 'Sjoe! It was the best!'.

Peter's attention to how he looks means that he is very style-conscious, and he argues that 'without styles in your life, your life wouldn't be exciting'. Peter wears his favourite 'G-Unit' (the US rapper 50 Cent's clothing label) jacket to school everyday, and likes 'name brands' because they're fashionable, but also because 'you don't want to be out...now all your friends have it, if you don't have it, they going to say he can't afford it'. Peter will scan the pages of magazines in search of inspiration from celebrities. He reads 'You' magazine, skipping the South African section, to the international celebrity section at the back, looking at 'what clothes people have on, cos they stunning always, especially Usher, I like his style, that's like my style, he's like that formal kind of guy'. Peter doesn't like 'gangsterism' clothing, 'hangy pants

and all that'. 'Formal' clothing shows he's a 'gentleman', who has 'respect for everybody around me'. He directly links this to not 'causing a fight'. If you have respect for yourself, and dress respectfully, people will respect you and therefore conflict can be avoided. This has formed a common theme in the narratives of the young men in the study, who have to manage their appearances in a way that will avoid conflict.

Another way in which he protects himself against the gangsterism in his home community is by attending 'Youth' every Friday evening at his local church, 'cos on a Friday night it's like gangsterism night, because everybody has money on a Friday so they rob people, so then that just keeps me out of the road, safe and in church'. He feels a close bond with all the other youth members, and they will sing together, pray together, read scriptures and play board games. Peter's sense of self is deeply connected to Mitchell's Plain. However, the final story that plays a role in his dreams for the future is that of his brother's marriage to an English woman. Peter told this love story with great dramatic effect, and his family feels that his brother, through securing a stable job and marriage, has built a success of himself in London. Peter hopes he will do the same.

The way in which Peter narrated his life story to me suggests that he primarily experiences his subjectivity through his body. He literally performed each story in his narrative; he recalled the memory in his body and the telling of that memory required a physical replay of past events. This, combined with the fact that Peter never offered analyses of his experiences or of the world, even when asked, meant that he was actively presenting me with a straightforward storyline (and identity) with no complications or contradictions. In doing this, he was asserting his ability to control the image of his identity, so that it may fit into the narrative of his 'making it' and becoming the 'best' in sports, styles and his career.

"Lindiwe (Lindi)"

[Protea High]

'My name is Lindiwe 'Lindi' Bikwani, and I am a young woman who has struggled to live a life of happiness because of the obstacles my family and I go through'

' I'm black and I'm female and I'm young and I'm going somewhere'

Lindi's life and identities are framed by struggle narratives: the struggle her life has been, the struggle of black people across the world, the struggle of being a woman, and the struggle of being poor. These are apparent from her identity box on page 67-68 (Fig.4-7). For Lindi, 'the most important thing for me is to know where I come from', and the story of her mother, her community, her country, as well as her own life, are what fuel Lindi's determination to build a better life for herself and her future family. Lindi's mother had her at a young age and so Lindi was raised by relatives in a different city. The consequence was that Lindi had to learn to be independent and responsible for herself at a young age, and 'had to grow up before I even wanted to'. When speaking about a wealthier friend's background, Lindi remarked that

> 'Prudence's background is quite light. It's not that difficult being Prudence. Like for me, I've lived a very difficult life since from birth, I have struggled a lot, a lot, a lot... but I don't...whatever I do, even if I fail, I don't say to God, 'oh God how could you do this?' just because I've struggled... You must push... you must push...
> [*Hits one hand with the other several times to emphasise perseverance*]'

Being Lindi is overcoming the many barriers that life presents, and doing it with strength, pride, and faith in God, as 'God did it on purpose to make me struggle in order for me to be successful in the future'.

Being 'black' is very important to Lindi, who feels deeply connected to the experience of black people under apartheid. Lindi lives in Langa, the oldest 'township' in Cape Town, and often speaks with an 'old, old man' that lives near her. He tells her stories from the past, about living under apartheid, and when I asked her how that makes her feel, she said

> 'Sometimes I cry you know, sometimes I do want to cry. Cos if we were living that time, I don't think we could have survived, because some of us are so small-hearted...maybe some of us could have worked for the enemy because of wanting to live and not to die...'

This awareness of the sacrifices made by the previous generation weigh heavily on Lindi, and she would often speak about the pressure of 'this time', on young people to

do well in school, a pressure which she exerts on herself without relief. For Lindi, being black means honouring the past and striving to achieve greatness:

> 'All of the black people have struggled you know, and I know that some of us, we live in a better present than before, so being black to me is to honour the people who have passed away for me to live like this...it's having honour, it's having pride, it's having integrity, it's having everything man. Sarah, being black to me it's something powerful, it's something great, it's something that needs to be acknowledged by us. So being black to me it's amazing and I wouldn't change anything about myself and my blackness and my identity.'

Whilst Lindi feels like this, she is aware that many of her peers do not feel the same, and she expresses deep frustration at the people who don't acknowledge the past, and who instead focus on material gain in the future, who say 'I want to be a celebrity, I want to have this and I want to have that'.

Lindi is very critical of consumer culture and the way in which money determines friendships in her school. People who assert their wealth, through expensive clothing or possessions such as i-pods and cell phones, frustrate Lindi as it 'doesn't mean you better...doesn't mean you happy', it just means 'the other person is luckier than you are'. However, she acknowledges that these divides upset her and her friends, who 'all hang out because we can't afford things'. She tried to dismiss these feelings but her emotions were evident: 'I didn't ask for my life, I didn't ask for not having a cell phone, I didn't ask for not...sometimes you know, it is sad, but sometimes you just, hayi suka...I don't care'.

Lindi describes Langa as a place with 'a lot of violence and hatred', in which she doesn't want to raise her family. Her brother is involved in a gang, and Lindi cannot be seen in their rival gang's territory, which is half of Langa, or 'they gonna hurt me and do all kinds of things to me you know, so I wanna, I wanna get away from that'. However, Lindi doesn't believe that there are any places left in South Africa, and in the world, that are not affected by violence. She believes that 'this time is the beginning of the end', and links this to the way in which the connection to the past, which many young South Africans are denying, cannot be severed as the effects of apartheid are 'still rising':

> 'We facing the judgement years and we're all going to get toasted [*over the fire*] because of the mistakes we are doing and because of the mistakes we did [...] Apartheid, it's forming, it's becoming...something. It's repeating itself but it's repeating itself two times the way it was. So it's two times the problems, everything that's happening now, the way of thinking, the things that happened. Our children are going to face it a lot more and they going to

> struggle a lot more. We might not survive. We won't live the years that our grandmothers and great grandmothers lived, because of the pressure of the problems. I think we actually digging our own grave with the things that we doing so we might not last…So I think this day and age and now, it's the end'

This interview with Lindi was chilling, as she described the troubles facing her generation: the gang culture, the teenage pregnancies, the drug and alcohol abuse, the hopelessness, the HIV/AIDS deaths. Whilst Lindi does enjoy partying, she is also keeping her sights firmly fixed on finishing school, so that she doesn't have to sit, unemployed, in 'e-loxion [*township*], staring at the sun, each and everyday'.

Her two role models are her mother, who she is hoping to live with next year, and Oprah Winfrey. Oprah is a figure that looms large in the lives of all the female participants. Lindi described Oprah's life story, and compared it to her own. Oprah's rise from poverty to extensive wealth is something Lindi wants to emulate: 'she has changed her life in a very very powerful way you know, and I want to do that too, I want to jops [*flip*] my life, just run my life around and become this amazing person that everybody is waiting to see, waiting to look up to'. She believes that

> 'South Africa is a country is waiting for us [*points to herself*], for people like us who have a vision to just explode [*snaps fingers twice*] and become this huge, huge, very, very intelligent country with intelligent people. But I think it needs that umph! that boost, so I think it's waiting for us to give it that boost.'

Lindi is very keen to lead an example to the people around her, and this is the role she believes she plays in changing the dark prophecy she laid out above. Being a woman plays a large part in this, as whilst in the past they struggled and 'women were treated like slaves and men were ruling, now males are loosing their greatness and women are getting more amazing each and everyday'. Whilst her mother didn't have the chance to finish her education, Lindi believes that 'because we live in democracy now', it is up to her to take the initiative and 'do whatever I want', as a person's 'race' is no longer a determining factor in their future (reflecting the individualist discourses critiqued in Chapter 4). Lindi hopes to become a marine engineer,

> 'So in ten years I wanna be a captain of a ship with R55000 a month! My own car and my house in Camps bay or Clifton next to the beach, so when I'm lying in my bed I'm gonna see the sea. See the sunset.'

When she daydreams, it's nearly always about driving her future Audi A3 2.0. Struggle narratives under the framework of God's Will offered a justification for the hardship her life has been, yet a 'making it' narrative defines her future.

Fig.4: '"See": When I realised I'm big, I need to take care of myself. In this life you're going to get hurt, you're going to struggle'

Fig. 5: '"Loss": My uncle was hit by a car in February, he had just retired. It made me more aware of life and reality'

Fig.6: '"Dreams": to travel, have a house, a family, a car, the bling, and be a marine engineer'

Fig.7: "Woman"

"Esme"

[Protea High]

'Whatever I am today it's because of me. I'm still proud of myself cos I could have done anything, I could have started doing drugs, I could have done anything but I didn't and I was strong enough ...sometimes I cry because I am so proud of myself for not getting into that...now I've found a sense of belonging within myself, not with people and family, because of what happened I'm always gonna know that nobody cares there. Your current situation is not your destiny so you can move beyond that if you really want to. Like the people who have hurt me. I want to rise above them.'

Esme's narrative is one shaped by trauma. Before continuing with her story, it is important to note that she has been in counselling for several years, and confidently speaks about herself and her identity, which is why she was asked to become a participant. Had she not been the strong individual she is, or been in counselling, I would have organised access to counselling and not continued with the interviews. In the interviews we did not discuss her traumatic experiences, but spoke about who she sees herself as being, in South Africa and the world. Her identity is inextricable from what she has gone through in her life, which includes emotional, physical and sexual abuse, as is the case with many young South Africans. Her childhood was extremely unstable, as her parents neglected her and she often lived with strangers, or in a boarding house.

Each side of her identity box (Fig.8-11, pages 71-72) was a stage in her journey, from a 'victim', through a period of conflict and self-help, to spiritual growth, and finally to herself now and in the future; 'all grown up', independent and successful. This was represented in the colours that went from darker to brighter to white, which she says was a process people could see from the outside. Esme's interaction with others, her understanding of her self and her identity, and her entire way-of-being in the world are all shaped by and understood through these experiences, and through the 'spiritual journey' she has gone through in overcoming the effects of trauma on her psyche. Inside the box, Esme put photographs of people that have inspired her. Esme's narration of her spiritual journey is her way of dealing with her past, offering her an identity that can incorporate the pain she has been through, yet also the possibility of transcending it.

As with other participants, there would often be one or two narratives that were enacted in the interview that described critical moments in their lives which had changed how they saw and interacted with the world. For Esme, this was on a youth leadership camp when she was fourteen. That was Esme's 'turning point'. She described the moment to me as if living it again, and described how she had been blindfolded and asked to trust that those around her would catch her when she fell backwards off a table. In being able to do this, Esme described how she 'let go of it [*her pain*] and it was so light, I felt so free'. This was the first step in her 'journey' of 'finding' herself. Since then, Esme has developed a very strong faith in God. Having been raised a Catholic, she has always believed in God, but it was after overcoming the trauma of her past that she has decided to commit her life to the spiritual development of herself and others, as shown in her 'I wants' list, in appendix 4.

The following thought led Esme to becoming an avid reader, of books that answer some of the questions she has about life, death, God, suffering, and humanity:

> 'I always thought 'why's everybody afraid of dying?', because death is something that has happened over the centuries, and people are *still* not used to it, ok they'll never be used to death because of loosing loved ones, but it has happened so over centuries, then why you still bothered about it? Then I though, ok, I need to read up on it'

When I asked her where she feels free, she said in school and in the public library, as these are places which take her away from all her problems, and where 'you get away from everything at home, and also because I love working and learning and I'm so, sometimes I'm so greedy, wanting to learn new things'. These books are part of a growing body of spiritual self-help books, which offer an alternative understanding of 'spirituality', as advertised by Oprah, who, along with Mother Teresa, is Esme's main role model. Whilst these 'spirituality' products attract critique for turning spiritual matters into consumer goods, the impact they have had on Esme's life is vast, and seems positive. Esme meditates and practices yoga, which helps her negotiate the complex conflicts in her family, as she moves between different family houses still mired by conflict

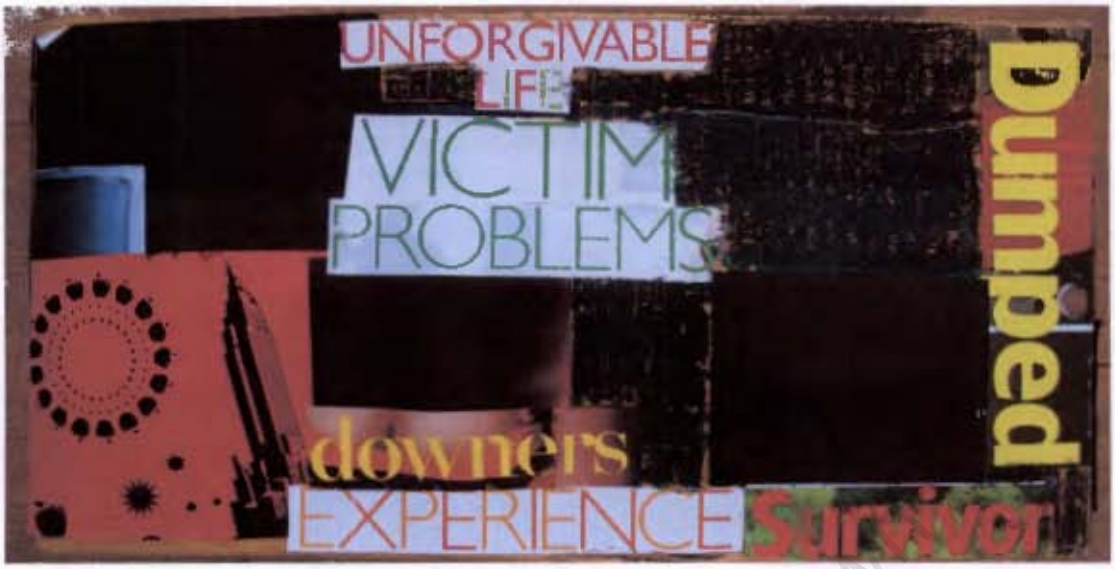

Fig. 8: 'Victim'

Fig. 9: 'Self-help'

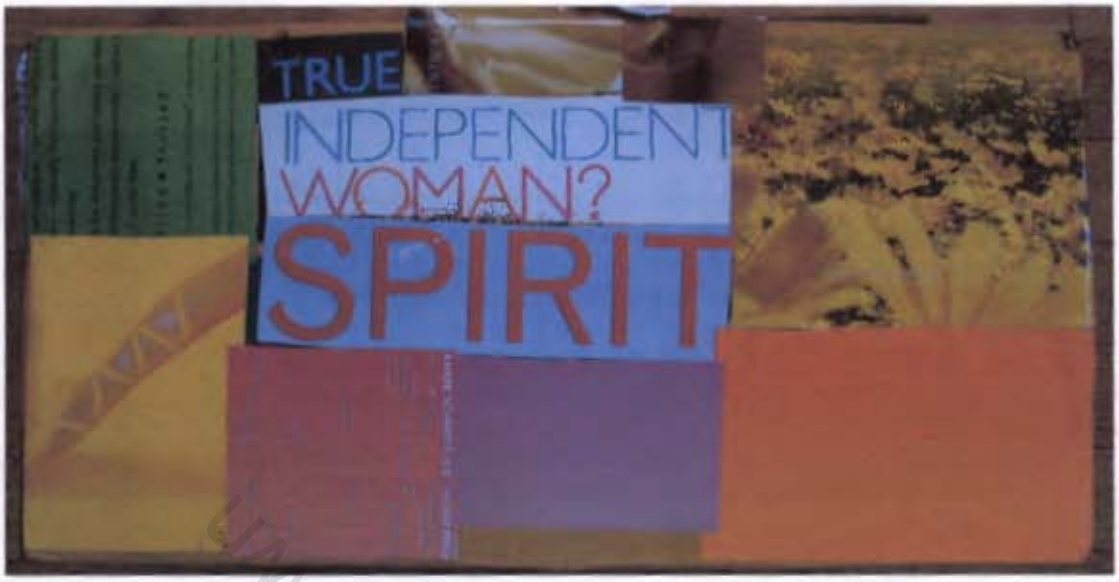

Fig. 10: 'Independent woman'

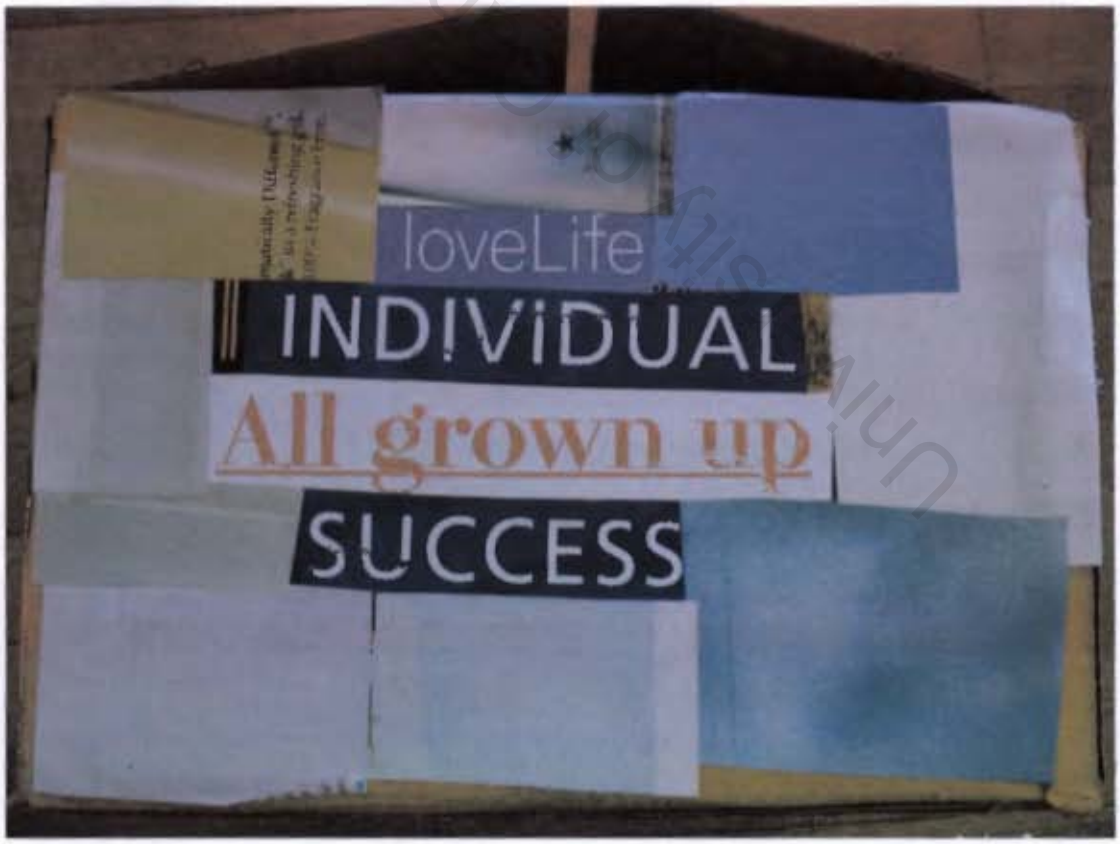

Fig. 11: 'All grown up'

Esme has a complex relationship to her perceived 'race', because her parents were 'coloured', and her relationship with them is immensely strained. Esme says she will not define herself by the colour of her skin, arguing that 'I want people to see me for who I am and like I am, like the identity that they see, not because I'm coloured so I'm like this. I don't like to be defined like that'. Esme finds herself resisting the positions to which she is being called both by her 'own race', and by other 'races'. She says she won't be 'pressured by my own race' into being a certain type of person:

> 'I'm not going to do things that they going to do, or feel the same ways or have the same opinions they have because I'm supposed to be a 'coloured' and I'm supposed to stand with them...that doesn't make sense to me because I'm my own person and I'm a individual, I'm not going to label myself'

Also, she spent several formative years of primary school in a 'white Afrikaner' community. She describes how irrespective of how she defined herself, she was 'involved' in a process of reacting to people's perceptions of her 'race':

> 'Because other people know or have that stereotype or make those assumptions about my race, I was involved. I fell under that same trap because, now you a coloured and you in a white community, what do you possibly have to offer? Even though I didn't understand that, and I had nothing to do with apartheid, I was still drawn into it and I suffered the consequences of people who lived I don't know how long ago...I had to convince them that I'm not [*coloured*], and don't treat me like that because I didn't do anything, you know. It's very difficult for them to understand because their parents probably told them stories and now they thinking ok here comes a coloured girl...she probably can't do this and that, so she's not going to be even regarded for this. She can't be acknowledged, she's a coloured, she's not white'

Esme recognised the way in which parents transmit their racialised ways of seeing to their children, which affects how they see her and in turn this affects how she reacts, and therefore who she becomes.

Esme then moved from this school to Protea High, and had to change her behaviour again to fit in, which was very difficult, 'cos now I came from a strictly white background and getting into a black culture'. Even though she resists being labelled 'coloured', this does not translate into her deconstructing stereotypes of other races, and she spoke in very fixed terms about what 'white people' and 'black people' are like.

Ultimately, Esme's spirituality and faith in God are what define her, and how she defines herself. She interacts with the world and all the people she meets

through this lens, and it was remarkable to see the perspective she has on her life, her country and this world, given her young age, as shown in the following quote:

> *Sarah*: What it's like to be at this moment in history, and in the world?
> *Esme*: I've thought about this before, because I spend a lot of time alone and I just let my mind go. I wouldn't want this world to be any different to what it is today, because it has a bit of everything in it. It has poverty, and crime, and sadness, and happiness, and everything that a human possibly needs to experience life.

"Bongani"

[Panorama High]

'I just want to be...to know. I just want answers that's all. I've got so many questions in my head. I just want answers. That's basically me, a person whose wanting answers and I'm not getting them. That just makes me frustrated you know'

Bongani presents himself as a philosopher; he has many questions and theories about why people are the way they are, about reality, perception and existence, and about language, race and gender. He has been to several very different schools, and this has combined with his persistent questioning to make him into a young man who is determined to find out why the world is the way it is. His identity box (below, Fig.12-16), instead of presenting an image of himself, reflects how he sees the world, and how that differs from how he wants the world to be. We live in a world obsessed by celebrity, fashion and body image, and dominated by violence. Bongani wants a world where people treat each other with respect, are free to speak their minds, and care for the planet.

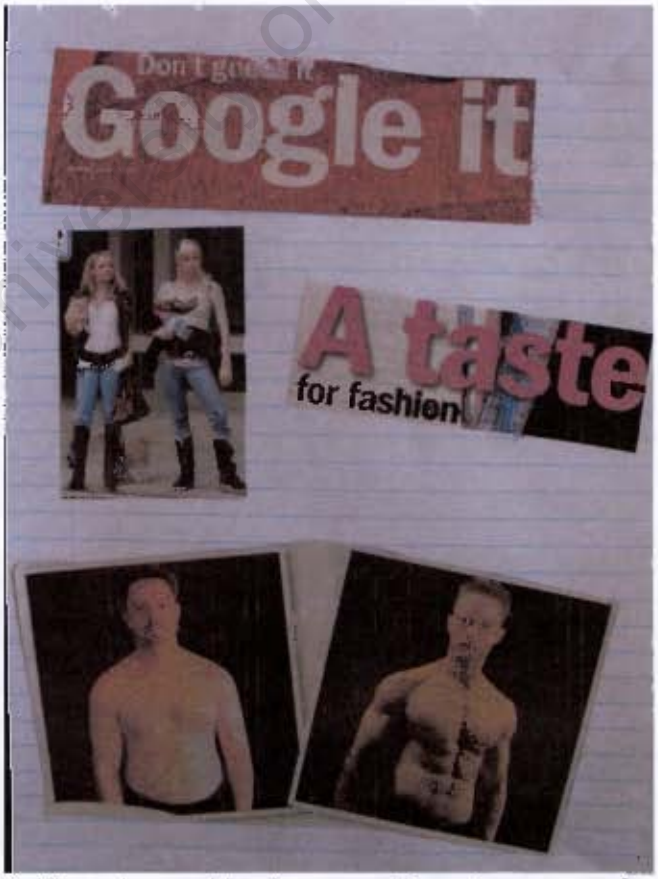

Fig.12: 'How the world is living, and treating you and society'

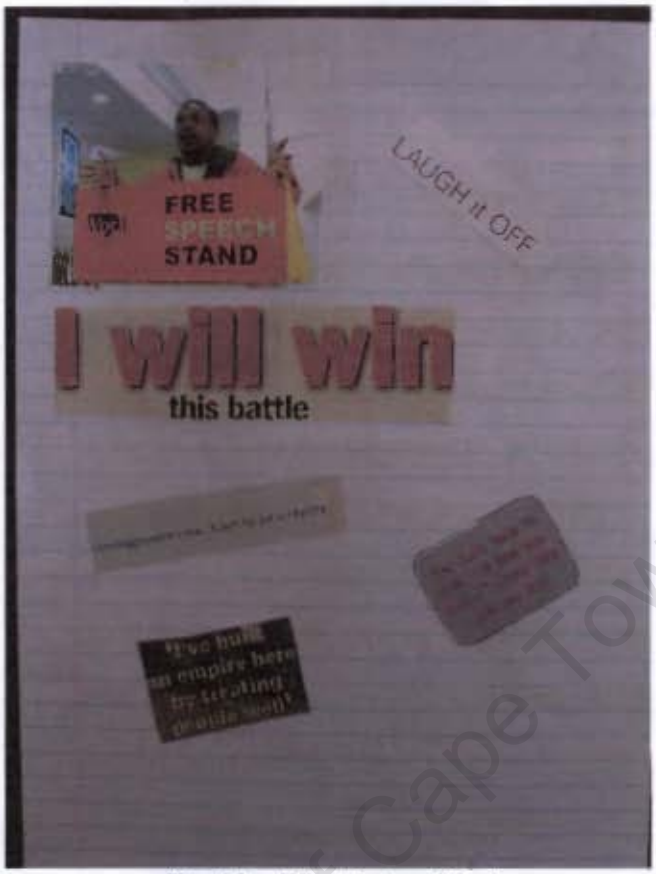

Fig.13: 'What I stand for'

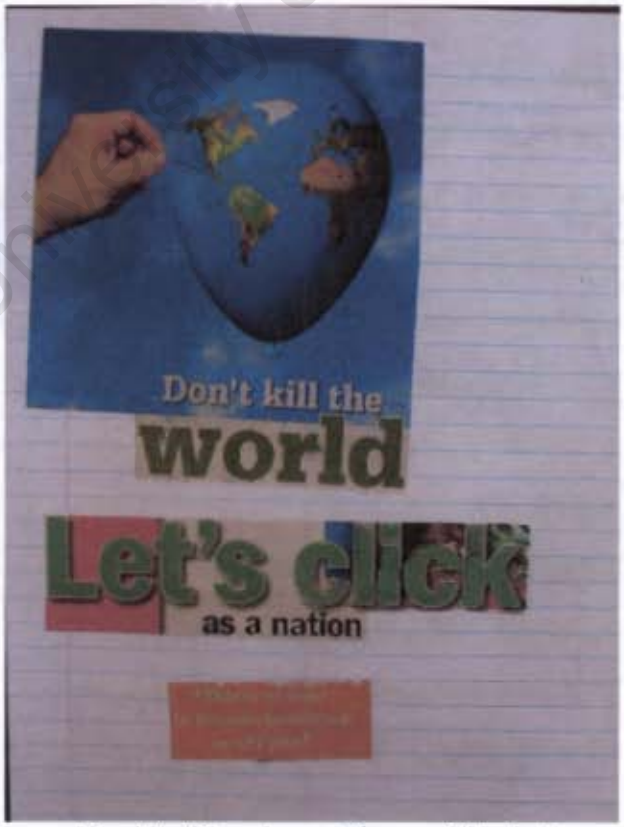

Fig.14: 'How I want the world to be'

Fig.15. 'How the world is, especially here in South Africa'

Fig. 16: 'All my fear/Death of me'

On the inside of Bongani's box was an article about gang violence in his home community, symbolising all the fear he walks around holding inside him. Living in fear has changed Bongani's relation to the world and to others, and this is beginning to shape his identity in ways which he doesn't like, but feels unable to do anything about.

Bongani attended primary school firstly in a coloured, working class area, then in a wealthy white school, and then in a very diverse school, racially and in terms of class. The first move was the hardest, and Bongani had to change his accent and attitudes very fast in order to fit into the 'high class' white environment. The school was in Johannesburg, and so the handful of black students were Tswana-speaking, which Bongani can't speak. As a consequence his friends were all white, and he developed an accent similar to theirs, for which he was teased by the black students, who called him 'white', a coconut' and 'chiz boy'. It was only upon moving to his last primary school that Bongani felt comfortable, as this school had 'all kinds of races', and fostered an environment of equality and acceptance. It was here that Bongani's adventures in 'dating other race groups' began, and with them, many questions for him about 'race' and behaviour.

Bongani, as discussed on page 43, had initially preferred white girls as that was what he saw in the magazines and therefore 'what I thought you should be attracted to'. His first girlfriend was 'white', but then his secondary school had no 'whites', so he began to date 'coloureds' (as opposed to 'black girls', because 'I know how they act, I've seen how they act... you know black chicks are just like so full of...[*trailed off*]'). However, 'coloureds acted like someone with no purpose', and were 'too easy to hook up with' so it wasn't a 'challenge', so he stopped. Bongani's dating antics were quite something to keep up with, but the racial element has since been toned down, as has Bongani's attitudes towards his own 'race', after a 'coloured' girl took him to task on his 'is it because I'm black' jokes that he would always make in class:

> 'To me, honestly, I used to think um... you have to be a certain type of race. If you this certain type of race you do certain type of things. But then I must say beginning of this year that whole race thing just wiped out of me because there's this one girl in my class who snapped and was like 'get over it, it's not all about that', I mean she really talked to me [...] I always have a comeback for these type of things but I was just sitting there and listened to her. She does have a point, so ever since that day I never made a black joke again, cos I've really noticed that ok, everybody's the same. Have you read that book animal farm? It's pretty much like that. You rebel against a certain kind and in the end you see everybody's like that. The same person. Like when the pigs were human. That was basically when I realised everybody's just the same'.

Being challenged for his language, and having the opportunity to discuss the issue with someone, made all the difference to Bongani and how he viewed the world.

The most significant turning point in Bongani's life has occurred because of the violence in his home community. His closest friend, who he went to crèche with from the age of five, died after being stabbed in the heart by an acquaintance, after having accidentally kicked water onto the acquaintance's trousers. Shortly after this, Bongani and his friends were at a party and they got excessively drunk. He somehow stumbled home, but the next morning heard how another friend had been stabbed to death. He is now paranoid that he's next, because all of his friends have been in a violent fight, and both times it could have been him.

Bongani lives everyday in a permanent state of fear, as well as guilt, and this is changing how he interacts with the world:

> 'I just think just get it done, someone do something already you know, now when I walk home I keep a straight face, I don't make any expression, cos I'm just angry for people to stay away, I've developed that kind of facial expression for two years. That's really stopped me now. People tell me I'm unapproachable because I always look so angry at the world....I've shut down emotionally...You show one ounce of weakness and maybe that'll be your downfall. I don't show any emotion at all'.

He describes how he finds it hard 'to be a nice person' because of the anger he is walking around with, and because he is 'trying to be tough'. This has led to a break with his former passion for hip-hop, which has led to profound changes in his identity. He says that now 'actually I do get by; instead of listening to rap I listen to rock'.

Bongani remembers the exact day when his radio, which was normally tuned to MetroFM, was playing up and he accidentally tuned into Five FM and heard a song by the punk rock band Blink 182. Bongani 'couldn't get this song out of my mind', and he thought 'this is rock, how could I possibly like this thing?!', but since then his radio has stayed tuned to FiveFM, and he describes how it has helped him cope with his troubled environment:

> 'I think rock has helped me to at least to ease the pain because if I had to listen to rap I would have been like probably a gangster by now, cos when I listen to rock it puts me in another place, not a violent place. Ok some songs I do like cos it's loud, but I just scream to it cos that's how I let it out, let out the anger'

However, this has caused him problems with his friends, and has, in conjunction with his changing attitudes towards dating girls by race, changed his approach to his own identity:

> 'Now they're saying I'm not black enough cos I'm listening to rock...I mean rock like identifies me as a person. People have different identities, they choose to listen to that because of this and that, and I chose to listen to rock because that's really me, it tells my life. I told them that, they like 'no man, you must listen to hip hop'...Cos if you a black person and you listen to that I mean...really its...and if you living where I live then noooo... but I've managed to convince this other friend, and he really likes it also'

One of his many theories is that if gangsters listened to rock 'there would be no more violence', because hip-hop has no message anymore, and rock makes you think, so if you are about to shoot somebody and you think about it then you won't do it. Bongani describes himself as someone who is 'into exploring new things', and identifies himself as against his 'mainstream' friends, who continue to live their lives in the same way.

Bongani is infuriated by the way in which many of those around him, including his family, do not question their religious beliefs. He believes that many of the events in the Bible are metaphors, and that there are simply too many unanswered questions with regard to 'this whole God thing'. He has a complex theory about perception, existence, and reality, where he believes that the world only exists in each of our minds and we have separate realities that we construct for ourselves in our imaginations:

> 'I'm the only person in the world right, where everything I'm seeing is in my imagination. Like if we're in this room now, Adderley Street does not exist. It sounds weird but... It only exists when I'm there...No offence but it's like you're not here, it's just a figment of my imagination. Even when I touch something, just, I mean if you think about it, let's say I see the colour blue. Do you see it the same way? Like if I taste something, do you taste it the same way? And that whole thing how did language become what it is'

Bongani's questioning of what those around him take for granted allows him to see many of the contradictions that structure our world, though it often leaves him infuriated. This has become his identity, one which he claims for himself, and which other students respond to, with a mixture of admiration and revulsion (especially the Christian students).

Chapter 6 – Emerging Identities

Identity as a 'process of becoming' (Hall 1996) is clearly evident in the narratives of Mbuyi, Luvuyo, Peter, Lindi, Esme and Bongani. Their stories show *how* they have become who they are at this moment in time, yet also show the way in which each individual is occupying many different positions simultaneously, with complex negotiations taking place depending on the space that they are in, and who they are interacting with. The pain of confusion and exclusion, the joy of finding others with similar perspectives and feeling like you belong, and the psychological effects of these processes revealed the depth at which such struggles take place, and the impact they have on emotional well-being. There is a tension that shapes all of their identities, and this is between the discourses that locate them in certain positions, and their resistance to these. Through their narratives, we see them interact with and negotiate their way through these locations with agency and creativity.

Identity as a performance, and a performance dependent on the audience, was also apparent from the narratives. In telling me the stories of their lives, the participants had the opportunity to present me with whatever elements of their identities they chose. A striking difference was between how the young men presented their narratives, compared to the young women. Mbuyi, Emse and Lindi opened up as many questions for themselves as I did for them. The young men 'performed' more, were less self-reflexive in the interviews, and were more clearly concerned to present me with a certain image of themselves. This may be because of the sustained performances they enact in the context of violence they live in, as well as the fact that they had the full attention of a woman.

Across the narratives, the primary, and often only, claiming of a racial identity was in connection with the past, and all participants acknowledged their strong connection to the struggles of family members under apartheid. In particular, 'being black' was constituted through emotional connections to the struggle of the older generation. These young men and women were born at the end of apartheid, yet it is clear how much their experience is part of a continuation of the discursive world of apartheid. The institutional culture of the schools aims at assimilation into the 'white English-speaking' model, whilst the students call each other to occupy the oppositional positions of 'black' and 'coloured'.

However, their bodies are 'always-already marked' (Henriques, 1998:xv) in complex ways, which means that the boundaries between them are far from straightforward. Children now move between different racialised schooling environments, and this had profound effects on the shaping of their habituses. Children who have been transported from one residential area to another, as their parents have searched for work, are bringing these other places with them, and the effects these places have had on psychological and bodily practices: how they speak, how they carry themselves, what they wear, how they think, and what they believe in. Meanings are increasingly being confused, particularly in a transitory site such as the centre of Cape Town. Different and contradictory racial signifiers overlap on the same bodies, causing conflict as some students police each other into categories, whilst others are forced to resist, as they cannot erase the marks of their personal histories. Accents are a primary site on which conflicting racial signifiers are being negotiated.

Upon attending a 'white' school in Johannesburg, Bongani had to quickly change the 'coloured' accent he had acquired in primary school, in order for him to fit in with his new, white, friends (as he couldn't become friends with the Tswana students 'cos it's pretty difficult to talk English to someone who's black', if you also are). As Mbuyi moved from primary school, where she had been the only black student, to Panorama High, her 'white' accent resulted in her alienation from the other Xhosa-speaking girls at the school. Her tongue had not learnt to speak English the way the others girls had ('I just accidentally grew up with this accent') and so she was confronted with the question 'why aren't you like us?'. Who they met as they moved through different schools and communities, and how these new people responded to them as embodied individuals in bodies 'always-already marked' determined the path which their identities would take, in conjunction with the way in which they reacted to this gaze and judgement. The consequence is that racial meanings are consistently being reconfigured, resisted and subverted.

Power does not *determine* but instead *influences choices* for action (Crossley, 1996). Mbuyi's 'friends' bullied her on account of her accent and attitudes, and she could have remained with that group of friends, attempting to please them as their assertions of power demanded, and as she saw other girls doing. However, she decided to distance herself from them, and slowly developed a close friendship with someone inside the group who had a similar experience of being

bullied. Hall (1996) argues that the question of identity arises at the interface between the subject and the discourses in which they are embedded. It is therefore a question of the point at which disciplinary regulation of the self stops, and the individual's assertion of their own identities begins. Mbuyi was able to step outside of the blackness to which she was being called by her friends to define her own, and non-essentialist, sense of what it meant *to her* to be black. Bongani, Luvuyo and Lindi were engaged in similar internal dialogues. Peter and Esme resist attempts by others to draw them into being 'coloured', though Esme with considerably more force.

Therefore, whilst their discursive environment is structured along apartheid categorisations, discursive 'slippage' has increased due to increased movement across formerly segregated spaces, and this has brought with it increased resistance, on the part of individuals, to being 'fixed' into certain locations. It appears that the subject has more freedom in relation to discursive location, at least in their internal worlds, than the research by Dolby (2001) and Soudien (2007) indicates. Even though bodies are separated according to perceived 'race' in the schools, individuals are feeling less and less comfortable with, and within, racialised groupings. These individuals are constantly asserting their sense of themselves against others' ideas of who they are or should be.

In these narratives, questions of identity emerged when the feeling of belonging was disrupted, primarily through others' perceptions of difference, as was the case in the narratives of Mbuyi, Esme and Bongani. These narratives show the way in which identities are constructed through emotional and relational conflict. This resonates with Crossley's (1996) emphasis on the intersubjective nature of identity, and with Henriques' (1998) breakdown of the way in which bodily, relational and emotional entanglements work on identities.

Belonging can also exists in the purely imaginative realm, as a sharing of meaning alone (Crossley, 1996), not requiring space, conversation or physical interaction. The meanings held within different imaginaries were activated in the specific contexts of each participants' life, and had a profound effect on their identities. The joy of identification that individuals felt upon seeing, hearing or reading something that resonated with their experiences accounted for the deep connections that all participants had either to a style of music or, in Esme and Luvuyo's cases, an alternative spiritual world. It is these connections, many of which originate in other parts of the world, that the participants presented as the most

important parts of themselves. As argued by Giddens (1991), the 'phenomenal world' of the individual in modern society has been completely transformed, and transnational imaginaries have come to form key sites of belonging across continents.

Whilst they look out at the world from bodies that (some are aware) are 'raced', and automatically read 'race' off others, the internal and imaginary worlds of these individuals are interconnected through their drawing upon similar imaginative reservoirs. All these young, urban South Africans have daily access to television and radio, and are saturated in thousands of images and sounds conveying a wide breadth of ideas, aesthetics and lifestyles. Eyes and ears are critical to emerging forms of identity in South Africa, and Nuttall and Michael (2000) emphasise the senses in their discussion of contemporary cultural patterns in South Africa. They are the post-modern strollers of which Bauman (1996) speaks, individuals browsing the global media market place for that which appeals to their senses, and that which resonates with their own stories and experiences. Whilst many of the young people in this research do not have the money to consume many of the products that entice them, seeing and hearing these imageries is not expensive by television or radio, and imagination is without boundaries. In sharing access to similar pools of inspiration, they are making new connections across old borders, consciously and unconsciously.

There are three imaginative realms that are informing how these individuals are remaking themselves, reworking their identities until they find something that 'fits'. This research confirmed the assertions by Crossley (1996), Hall (1996), Henriques (1998), Motsemme (2002), Nuttall (2004a) and Shotter (1993) about the critical role that the imaginative realm, and the imaginative resources available, play in the construction of identities.

Firstly, all the individuals interviewed spoke about the amount of inspiration and strength that their favourite types of music gave them, and about how they identified with particular songs and singers. The two worlds that appeal the most are those of hip-hop and rock music, both of which, however commercialised they may be today, emerge out of rebellion against systems of power, and echoes of this resistance resonate with the experiences of these individuals today. Hip hop speaks to (globalised) racialised oppression, and life in the ghetto/township. Rock appealed to those that felt frustrated by 'mainstream' society and values. The young men in particular incorporated these sounds and styles as the primary elements in their self-identities, making them their own. They were not simply 'adopted'; they hold

different meanings in the South African context, and in the specific contexts of individual lives, and therefore are indeed given 'new meaning' (Salo, 2004:6), and 'transfigured' (Nuttall, 2004a:449) in these narratives.

Secondly, as shown by Motsemme (2002), spirituality forms a deep 'reservoir' for many of the participants, helping them face the hardship of their everyday lives. This is both in the form of formal religious institutions and individual explorations of spiritual issues, which is aided by discussions in the media. The three young women in particular framed their lives within a spiritual narrative.

Thirdly, all participants used the 'reservoir' of their imagined futures as a source of inspiration and strength, and identity. How they saw themselves in the future is an important part of who they are today. Here we come to the most common themes across all the narratives: a 'struggle' narrative of their pasts complemented by a 'making it' narrative for the future. This symbolises the position they occupy in the narrative of South African history, where they are bridging two worlds. Most of the participants are facing daily struggles against violence and poverty, the social and economic legacy of apartheid: in order to claim a positive identity for themselves they have to reach into the future, when they will have seized the opportunities available to them that their parents never had, and built a new world for themselves. They do this through constantly assessing material goods around them, on billboards, TV screens, and passers-by, and discussing which they will own (except for Esme). This reflects much more than a desire to join the global middle class. In claiming these futures for themselves, these individuals are asserting their right to be considered part of the 'rainbow nation' *today*, even though they do not have the resources to access it materially, as argued by Salo (2004) in her research in the Cape Flats. It is here that racialised boundaries are destabilised. The imagined futures of these young South Africans are in the same 'non-locatable' (Shotter, 1993) aspiratory imaginary, which exists only in their minds, yet is of a similar texture in all of their minds.

It is here that Freeman and Brockmeier's (2001) point about the way in which moral values are woven into narratives is critical. They argue that autobiographical narratives are 'inseparable from normative ideas of what life is, or is supposed to be, if it is lived well'. These young people, in telling the stories of their lives, and telling the stories of future successes, are representing what they believe constitutes a "good life", which reflects the options that are available to them, as structured by the values of the society in which they are embedded. They all yearn

for bodily security, in terms of good health and freedom from crime. However, they desire a life beyond survival and comfort, and the common theme was of 'making it' and being able to obtain the material luxuries they see a privileged minority enjoying; attaining these goods implies one has worth, and has been successful in life. Carbaugh (2001) wrote of the importance of identifying what cultural philosophies and values underpin narratives, and what assumptions are being made about how a person should and should not live. Whilst they are transforming the discursive and imaginative resources available to them in empowering ways, national and global networks of power relations define what these very resources will be, not only directly in terms of the content of radio, television and magazines, but also in terms of broader societal values. From these narratives, one can see that these young people are located within a capitalist society in which liberal values dominate, and this structures not only behaviour, but the very framework within which the idea of 'a person', and a 'good' person, is conceptualised. As argued at the end of Chapter 4, this framework is 'raced', yet the narrative analysis has allowed us to see the complex and myriad ways that racialised meanings are being negotiated *and remade* on the site of the individual.

These young individuals continue to hold the 'fractures of the past' in their psyches (Soudien, 2007:152). They are living not only 'entanglements with whiteness' (Erasmus, 2000a:388), but entanglements with blackness, colouredness, and the broken machinery of 'race thinking' (Erasmus, 2005) that apartheid instituted. Strauss (2004:30) argues that creolisation 'is about the ability to piece together, from situation to situation, conflicting cultural messages into identity performances that are sustainable and enabling', and this is exactly what these young people are doing, with startling confidence, though not without pain. This pain comes from negotiating, and deciding how to react to, the tension between the conflicting positions they are being called to by family, friends and other students, by the institutional culture of their schools, and by the cultural currents they identify with in popular culture and the media. Drawing on Glissant's conceptualisation of creolisation that Erasmus (2000a), Nuttall and Michael (2000) and Strauss (2004) employ, which 'signifies a continual process of cultural exchange that moves beyond the mere synthesis of two distinct cultural poles' (Strauss, 2004:29), I argue they are not the hybrid product of constructed binaries (black/white, global/local, modern/traditional, Western/African), but they are living creolised realities, in which they are piecing together the different

images and identities that speak to them, creatively constructing a picture of themselves that speaks to their complex experiences, in opposition to discourses and people that seek to 'fix' them. Narrative constituted the action of claiming different identities and explaining the presence of them all. Through narrating their life experiences, the participants sought to make sense of their identities, for themselves and for me, and locate themselves in time, space and society.

Conclusion

> 'You know nobody ever wants to listen to me because a lot of grown ups when I speak they don't listen because 'this is a child, what does she know'. Nobody gives me the chance to just speak and just to...to tell you what I think, and what are my ideas and thoughts, and this really gave me an opportunity to really bring out what I think and, you know really it was nice'
> (Esme 2)

When I asked the participants how they felt about the interviews, all spoke of how they had enjoyed the chance of taking a step back to think about themselves and the many issues that affect them. As shown in the article that Bongani placed inside his identity box, 'youth' are frequently portrayed in the media as a source of many of the countries current problems, particularly regarding crime. Mbuyi said, when referring to the problem of racism in Panorama High, that 'as long as nobody's talking about anything and nobody's breaking down things to us, then we'll never ever grow, we just gonna stay in that one place forever', and that 'the day we get over our sensitivities' will be the day that South Africa begins to change. With over half of South Africa's population being under the age of 25 (Statistics South Africa, Census 2001), and with the great challenges these young people face as they prepare for the future, it is vital to create a climate where young people are given a space to ask questions without judgement, where their voices are heard and treated with respect. In addition, there is the responsibility to generate media and language that speaks to and expresses the complex new ways-of-being that they are living.

Whilst they are indeed living behind racialised boundaries, within these boundaries there are many conflicting identities, and the individuals in this research are frequently challenging these boundaries. It appears that many more cracks and contradictory currents have developed since the research by Dolby (2001), Erasmus and De Wet (2003), and Gooskens (2006). The proliferation of discursive and imaginative resources in which these young South Africans are embedded is

providing them with new intimacies and allegiances that are enabling them to negotiate new ways-of-being in the world, as they attempt to generate an integrated sense of themselves. The focus groups and individual interviews revealed the extent to which these students, located at the intersection of many pathways (social, historical, and global) are continually having to ask themselves questions about who they are and want to be. The myriad ways in which young South Africans are making sense of who they are is apparent from these six narratives, from six young individuals in a school-going population of 12.5 million (Soudien, 2007).

What became apparent through the research was that the divergent paths which the identity narratives of young South Africans follow depend on how they are historically situated, materially and discursively; what discourses are operating to oppress and empower them, and how they interact with these; what networks of social and personal relations they are embedded within and how this intersubjectivity shapes their lifeworlds; and the identity narratives they plot for themselves, in light of the interaction between their positioning and the proliferation of imaginative and discursive resources to which they have access. Identity is *processual* and *narrative*, continually constructed by and between subjects as they make sense of the world around them and their position within it, and as discourses become interconnected with imagination. Identity speaks to the gap between how individuals are 'summoned' into positions, and how they 'fashion, stylise, produce and 'perform' these positions, and why they never do so completely' (Hall, 1996:14). It is through the stories we tell ourselves to make sense of, and cope with, our situation in life that we come to terms with and negotiate our multiple positionings, in the effort to construct a coherent, and empowered, self and identity.

Whilst these young South Africans are carrying with them, and inside them, the legacy of apartheid and apartheid ways of thinking, when speaking from their experience, in answering questions about their life-worlds, it became clear how complex their understandings were of how 'race' and power had worked against them in their lives. Identity for them is an open question, one which they are exploring with great fervour, and not a small amount of playfulness, as shown in the next photo, where one participant came to school with half her hair in an afro above her eye-brow piercing, and the other half neatly braided:

Fig 17: Afro/punk hairstyling

The individuals I interviewed hold within them a burning brightness, as they refuse to let their histories hold them back. These individuals are turbulently involved in the reflexive project of the self-identity (Giddens, 1991). New spaces are opening up in their minds, through the access they now have to many different ways of imagining themselves, and they are becoming increasingly confident in the task of being themselves. With the many strands of their experiences and dreams, they are weaving together new identities that do not conform to any categories.

Appendix 1: Consent form and information sheet

Youth Identity in South Africa

I, Sarah Jones, am currently undertaking research for my Masters thesis in Diversity Studies, at the University of Cape Town. I moved here two years ago from London, as I wanted to live and study in South Africa. I am interested in how young South Africans understand who they are, where they are coming from, and where they want to go. Having done focus groups in schools, I now want to work closely with 5-6 individuals so that I can gain a deeper understanding of their identity issues.

I would like to invite you, with your consent and the consent of your legal guardian, to join me in a conversation about your life and your identity. I believe that this process will offer you a space for reflection on your life, and a chance to express who you are and want to be. This process might be challenging, but will hopefully prove rewarding.

Below is an outline of what I hope we can do together:

- an introductory interview where we get to know each other and talk about your life history
- a morning/afternoon where we work on 'identity boxes' as a group, which is a process where you represent yourself through art
- a second interview to talk about some of the things you have been reflecting on

And also the following options:

- for closure on the process and as a thank you from me, we could work on photographic portraits of yourself in a location of your choosing, which you can keep as something to remember this time in your life
- If you would like it might be nice to keep a journal for this period, as I'm sure it will raise some important questions for you

In this process, you can ask me any questions about myself and the research.

You will remain anonymous in the research, unless we decide together that you would like for your photographs to be in the research. Your real names will not be used; we can come up with alternative names together.

On the next page is a consent form. You can let me know at any point if you no longer wish to be a part of the project, or if you or your guardian have any questions/doubts. My contact details are below.

Look forward to working with you!

Sarah Jones

Tel: 021 423 4234 Cell: 0760 338 138 Email: pnijones@yahoo.co.uk

Youth identity research consent form

1. I agree to participate in this research project
2. I have read this consent form and the information it contains and had the opportunity to ask questions
3. I agree for the interviews to be recorded and for the information to be used in Saran Jones' Masters degree thesis, and other articles which she may publish
4. I understand that I will remain anonymous and my real name will not be used in the publications
5. I understand that the photo will only be used in the research if I would like them to be
6. I understand that I am under no obligation to participate in this project
7. I understand I have the right to withdraw at any stage

Signature of Participant:_____.

Name of Participant:_____.

Signature of Guardian:_____.

Name of Guardian:_____.

Signature of researcher:_____.

Name of researcher:_____.

Date:

Appendix 2: Focus group interview schedule

School

1. What's it like being at this school?
2. What areas do you come from? What was it like when you first came here?
3. What do you like about this school?
4. What don't you like about this school?
5. What different groups are there in school?
6. Where do the different groups hang out?
7. How do the different groups interact with each other?
8. What other differences are there?
9. Who is 'cool' at school? How do you feel about that?

Friendship and tastes

10. How would you describe your group of friends?
11. Where do you hang out?
12. What do you most like doing?
13. What type of a) music, b) magazines, c) movies, d) clothes, e) books do you most like?
14. What do you most like about them?
15. Who do you admire and look up to? Who do you most respect?
16. What is most important to you each about who you are?
17. Could you tell me why you feel so strongly about those parts of your identities?

South Africa

18. How do you think your school life is different from that of your parents?
19. How different do you think South Africa is now to when your parents were growing up?
20. Do you feel a part of the 'rainbow nation'?
21. Would you define yourself racially, or not? Do you think your 'race' affects how other people see you?
22. Do you think 'race' matters to your generation, to how you relate to each other?
23. How do you feel about being South African?
24. Do you think you'll live and work in South Africa?
25. What are your thoughts on what the future will look like here?
26. How do you see yourself in the future? Where would you each like to be in 10 years?

Appendix 3: Individual interview questions

The following is a list of all the questions asked of each individual interview participant over two interviews. The first interview focused more on their life story, and the second was an exploration of certain key aspects of their identities that arose in the first interview, as well as an exploration of broader topics.

I want to know what the most important parts of being 'you' are.

What is the story you would tell of your life?

Tell me about experiences that have made you who you are.

What aspects of your identity are most important to you? How would you describe yourself?

When and where do you feel most happy?

When do you feel like you are free to be yourself?

When do you feel frustrated?

Inspiration and interest:

What have you been thinking a lot about recently?

What gives you inspiration?

Who do you look up to?

Are there any characters or celebrities in books, on TV or in films who you identify with and have thought 'yes, that is me'?

What do you look forward to each week, or in general, what do you get excited about?

What are you really obsessed by, or interested in?

What clothes are you into at the moment?

Where do you get inspiration for what you wear? Whose/what style do you most like?

What do you watch on TV?

What music do you most like? Why? What does it mean to you?

What's the coolest thing you've seen this year?

School:

How did coming to this school change you?

Who holds more power in the school, amongst the students, and why? How is power negotiated?

What is it like being amongst students who are of different backgrounds to you?

What are the stereotypes of 'black' and 'coloured' students at this school, about how they will act and what they will like?

In what ways do you not fit into these stereotypes? How do you resist these stereotypes?

Do you have friends of other 'races'?

How was it becoming friends with them?

What different styles are there in school?

Does class affect how students interact?

South Africa:

Could you tell me about something you saw recently that really struck you and made you change how you think about the world?

You are preparing what's called a time capsule. It's a egg-shaped capsule that we're going to bury deep underground so that in a hundred or thousand years, we don't know, people are going to dig it up. How would you describe this time in the world and in South Africa to them? How would you describe your place in it?

What does it mean to be a South African?

Do you feel a part of the rainbow nation?

How do you feel when you watch South African 'soapies'?

What effect do you think 'race' has had on your growing up?

Would you define yourself racially? Do you think your 'race' affects how other people see you?

What does being 'black'/ 'coloured' meant to you? How do you feel about being 'black'/'coloured'?

When have you felt 'boxed' or 'labelled'?

Do you think 'race' matters to your generation, to how you relate to each other?

How often do your parents talk about apartheid? How does it make you feel?

What do you feel like you are carrying from your parents?

What thoughts do you have on the future of South Africa?

Imagination:

When you catch yourself day-dreaming, what are you thinking about?

When do you feel free?

If there was nothing to stop you, not that there is, where and what kind of life would you build for yourself?

You are dreaming about your perfect day- what happens in it?

How have you found these interviews?

Appendix 4: Participants 'I wants' lists

Mbuyiselo

1. I want pure joy
2. I want spiritual enlightenment
3. I want to pass with 70% or higher
4. I want to get a good tertiary education
5. I want to change the world
6. I want to change myself
7. I want self-confidence
8. I want to do the right thing according to God's eyes
9. I want to do what's right according to me
10. I want to live my life according to me
11. I want wisdom
12. I want my soul to be at peace
13. I want to be sure about my future
14. I want to receive distinctions at the end of the year
15. I want to be successful
16. I want to work hard
17. I want to dream big and make these dreams come true
18. I want to be a better person
19. I want to grow
20. I want to stop looking for approval by people
21. I want to be a stronger, wiser and more faithful woman
22. I want to be ME!

Luvuyo

1. I want to be a rich person
2. I want to be a grand hustler
3. I want to be an eternal learner of the M.O.B teachings
4. I want to be a shrewd person
5. I want to own stuff
6. I want to make a name for myself
7. I want to be among the best
8. I want to achieve stuff
9. I want to start a franchise
10. I want a family (20 years time)
11. I want to fast forward time
12. I want to rewind time
13. I want to be a Kayne West fan forever
14. I want to be involved in important stuff
15. I want to be a role model to someone
16. I want to perfect my talent(s)
17. I want to be more open- have a bigger circle of friends
18. I want to know when to lead and when to follow
19. I want to know if what I am doing currently is laying the foundations of tomorrow?

Lindi

I want…
To have a good life
To be successful
To be happy
To be more wiser
To have everything I need
To have the ability to have everything
To have the potential to become everything
To be rich
To be accepted
To accept the things I cannot change
To have the wisdom to change the things I can
To leave a trail of who I am to other people
To love and cherish the ones I love
To be uplifting to others
To set an example
To inspire others
To motivate
To be acknowledged
To create beautiful and intelligent things
To be honoured for the work I do
To be a good person and friend

Esme

1. I want to help people spiritually
2. I want to study and do religious teachings and spiritual teachings and in this way I would like to help people
3. I want to dedicate my whole existence and my whole life to people.
4. I want to get married and have two children.
5. I want my husband to have the same vision as I do.
6. I want to inspire people to be great.
7. I want to be financially stable (comfortable life).
8. I want to love people, because if you love yourself then you can love others, because even just showing that love to someone can be enough to save that person's life.
9. I want to change the world and save the world (try)
10. I want to give people everything that their heart desires till the day I die.
11. I want to live because life is beautiful.
12. I want to see the beauty in people (the gift in everyone).
13. I want nothing for myself but everything for others.
14. I want to influence people's lives with God in me.
15. I want people to see God in me.
16. I want to have a forgiving heart.
17. I want to live a purposeful live, and this is a purposeful live within God
18. I want to move beyond my circumstances, and rise above those who have left me broken.

Bongani

1. I want to live past 80.
2. I want to try to be a faithful person.
3. I want the 2010 world cup to actually happen.
4. I want to retire at the age of 40.
5. I want to travel the world.
6. I want the South African government to stop its corruption.
7. I want every black gangster to listen to rock music.
8. I want to be in a rock band.
9. I want to be left alone to do things my way.
10. I want my school career to end.
11. I want my girlfriend to be more broad-minded.
12. I want to be in a normal relationship.
13. I want to have children with one woman only.
14. I want to get married by the age of 30.
15. I want to start a family by the age of 30.
16. I want another chance at getting Simphiwe.
17. I want my family to stop acting as if they are better than everyone else.
18. I want our national cricket team to stop choking at major tournaments.
19. I want Liverpool to win the league.
20. I want black people not to be given too much power.
21. I want to fall in love again.
22. I want to stop feeling depressed about nothing specific.
23. I want to get a glimpse of my future self.
24. I want to be remembered for being an individual.
25. I want to get drunk, without consuming alcohol.
26. I want to be with Xoliswa for a very long time, as long as possible.
27. I want to find out if God really exists.
28. I want to know if the bible tells the truth.
29. I want girls from the age of 15 and under to be all virgins, above 15 not to be.
30. I want to know the meaning of life.

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